Commentary

January 1996

Israel & the Assassination: A Reckoning

Hillel Halkin

For a New Concert of Europe

Mark Helprin

The Soul of Man Under Physics

David Berlinski

How to Save American Jews

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Record Blues

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Exchanges

Is Pat Robertson an Anti-Semite? / Race & Jazz

Books in Review

Joseph Adelson • Arch Puddington • Jay M. Harris
George Russell • Robert Alter • Walter Berns

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Commentary
January 1996

Letters from Readers

Is Pat Robertson an Anti-Semite?

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz ["In the Matter of Pat Robertson," August 1995] is to be commended for his honesty in belatedly conceding that I have been correct all along in alleging that Pat Robertson, if not an anti-Semite, is an energetic retailer of anti-Semitic libels: "The conclusion is thus inescapable that Robertson, whether knowingly or unknowingly, has subscribed to and purveyed ideas that have an old and well-established anti-Semitic pedigree." He is also commendably honest in admitting that his sole criterion for deciding whether to support or oppose Pat Robertson, Pat Buchanan, or Louis Farrakhan is support for Israel. Here Mr. Podhoretz and I part ways. I am opposed to *all* Jew-baiting demagogues who lead mass movements in the United States, whether they are anti-Israel or pro-Israel. (As far as I can judge, Israel is not so devoid of American friends that its champions must cultivate American kooks.)

Having conceded that my message about Robertson was accurate, Mr. Podhoretz spends much of the article trying, rather ineptly it must be said, to smear the messenger. In constructing an elaborate and necessarily ill-informed theory about my strategy and motives in exposing Robertson, Mr. Podhoretz fails to follow the first rule of historical fiction—get the dates right. "Curiously," he writes,

> though Lind complained [in *Dissent*] about the defense of Pat Robertson by a number of conservative intellectuals, he said almost nothing there about anti-Semitism. It was only a little while later, when he repaired that omission in his article about *The New World Order* in the *New York Review*, that he hit pay dirt.

The implication is that I had resolved to go after Robertson for his views on social policy, and that I added my allegations of anti-Semitism only as a hasty afterthought in January 1995, in the several weeks between the appearance of the *Dissent* and *New York Review* articles.

I am flattered to be attributed the diabolical cunning of one of Robertson's Schiffs or Warburgs ("Curiously . . . "). The truth, sadly, is less dramatic. When, in the fall of 1994, I wrote my *Dissent* essay, "Why Intellectual Conservatism Died" (which Mr. Podhoretz, in his usual slapdash fashion, calls "How Intellectual Conservatism Died"), I expected that it would appear after the essay on Robertson in the *New York Review*, which already had been not only written but tentatively accepted. I saw no point in repeating myself on the subject of Robertson's anti-Semitic rhetoric in *Dissent*, for the simple reason that the forthcoming *New York Review* essay would be my *third* article on the subject.

If Mr. Podhoretz had bothered to do a simple check on Nexis, he would have discovered that my first exposé of Robertson's anti-Semitic conspiracy theories was "The Exorcism," an essay in the December 14, 1992 issue of the *New Republic*, published when I still worked for Irving Kristol (as executive editor of the *National Interest*) and hoped that mainstream conservatives might still repudiate the disastrous "no enemies-to-the-Right" strategy. I drew attention to *The New World Order* once again in an article in the "Outlook Section" of the *Washington Post* of October 16, 1994,

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entitled "Calling All Crackpots." It is a pity that neither Mr. Podhoretz nor any of the other prominent conservatives paid any attention to the first two of my three attacks between 1992 and 1995, in three different national publications, on Robertson's recycling of the Judeo-Masonic theory. If the debate about Robertson had occurred, as I hoped it would, back in 1992, then the conservative movement might have avoided disgrace.

Having misconstrued the public record of my statements on the subject, Mr. Podhoretz, presumably on the basis of mental telepathy, claims to understand my motives: "Michael Lind . . . is undoubtedly much more exercised by Robertson's cultural agenda . . . than by his fantasies about Jewish bankers in the 18th century." "Undoubtedly"? If my major concern had been the religious Right's social agenda (which is exactly the same as it was when I joined the Right), then Robertson was a peculiar target, because that agenda plays a relatively minor role in his teachings, compared to economic quackery and foreign policy.

The New World Order is about foreign policy, and it was my background in foreign policy and European intellectual history that made me particularly sensitive to the dangers of the theory it purveys. I had never paid much attention either to Robertson or the religious Right when I picked up a copy of *The New World Order* in 1991 in a B. Dalton bookstore in Arlington, Virginia; I expected to be amused by the promised explanation of world events like the Gulf war (during which I held a minor position in the State Department). Instead, I was shocked to discover that Robertson, who I had assumed was a conventional evangelical like Jerry Falwell, had accused President George Bush (for whom I had voted, and for whose administration I had briefly worked) and the Council on Foreign Relations (which I had joined after being nominated by William F. Buckley, Jr.) of being part of a Judeo-Masonic-Satanic conspiracy.

When Robertson, instead of fading away like the other TV evangelists, became a power-broker in the 1992 election, I remembered his crazy book and immediately tried to sound the alarm, not because of the conventional Calvinist theology that Robertson shares with Jerry Falwell and Jim Bakker, but because of what Robertson shares with Eustace Mullins and Nesta Webster.

Mr. Podhoretz professes to find it incredible that a prominent younger neoconservative foreign-policy intellectual would have had any reason to be appalled that the President of the United States, for whom he had voted and worked, and the conservative figures he had once admired, should pay court to an anti-Semitic demagogue who claimed the Gulf war was a "set-up" and the cold war a windfall for moneylenders. After all, Mr. Podhoretz says, I am not a Jew! (In fact, I am partly of Jewish descent—a fact that Mr. Podhoretz's telepathic powers somehow failed to uncover.) Perhaps I am too optimistic about human nature, but I would like to think that any principled young partisan Democrat, even a Gentile, would have reacted similarly in 1992, if candidate Clinton and the entire liberal intelligentsia had begun kowtowing before Louis Farrakhan and had united to smear Farrakhan's critics.

All of Mr. Podhoretz's ad-hominem attacks against me cannot alter the fact that, far from being an isolated malcontent, I am simply the best known of a substantial number of younger conservatives and ex-conservatives who have been repelled by the kind of unprincipled opportunism exemplified by Mr. Podhoretz's cynical argument that Robertson must be forgiven his anti-Semitic rantings because he supports Israel. After the publication of my article in *Dissent*, I received around two-dozen letters or phone calls of support from young policy analysts and staffers at conservative institutions including the American Enterprise Institute, the *Washington Times*, *National Review*, and COMMENTARY. Though they could not express their dissent in public for fear of being purged, they agreed with me that the cynical no-enemies-to-the-Right policy of the conservative leadership has left a taint that no number of Republican electoral victories can redeem.

Indeed, a case can be made that those of us who have rejected the strategy of no enemies to the Right are, or were, the only genuine neoconservative intellectuals of our generation—a title that must be denied to the twentysomething apparatchiks who, from week to week, revise their opinions to match the GOP party line promoted by William Kristol and Roger Ailes.

Neoconservatives—or so I understood when I became one in 1984-85—shared support for a resolute anti-Soviet foreign policy with the members of the old Right. At the same time, neoconservatives differed from paleoconservatives in supporting the pro-labor, social-market capitalism of the New Deal, Fair Deal, and Great Society (as distinguished from the War on Poverty), a tradition that included support for universal health care; in defending the race-neutral civil-rights tradition of Martin Luther King, Jr., Bayard Rustin, Lyndon Johnson, and Hubert Humphrey against both the multicultural Left and the racist Right; and in upholding the values of liberal Enlightenment humanism and modernity not only against totalitarianism on the Left but against religious and racist obscurantism on the Right.

In the intervening decade, while my allies and I have not retreated from our commitment to these neoconservative principles, the most prominent neoconservatives, with the honorable exceptions of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Daniel Bell, and Nathan Glazer, have dropped the "neo" from "conservatism" and adopted the most discredited and repugnant dogmas of the Republican far Right. They have cast aside any reservations about the so-

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cial costs of laissez-faire capitalism; become champions of states' rights; lionized Charles Murray, who claims that racial integration is doomed by the supposed "dysgenic" qualities of black and Hispanic Americans; and made common cause with creationists who want American schoolchildren, in this age of biotechnology, to be taught the allegories of Adam and Eve and Noah's ark as "creation science." (It seems like an eternity ago that I wrote an article in COMMENTARY defending evolutionary biology against radical feminism and the anti-Darwinist Left.) Any one of these capitulations to far-Right ideology would have been sufficient to doom mainstream conservatism as a serious intellectual and cultural force—whatever the ephemeral electoral successes of today's political conservatism, which derives by way of Richard Nixon from George Wallace.

The neoconservatives like to talk about "the treason of the intellectuals." But the *trahison des clercs* that Julien Benda criticized in the 1920's was the abandonment of Enlightenment humanism by converts to the Right among the French intelligentsia who were eager to participate wholeheartedly in political movements of national regeneration based on racism, integral nationalism, and religious revivalism.

If Norman Podhoretz and his dwindling band of allies want to use talmudic reasoning to justify applying the name of "neoconservatism" to a synthesis of laissez-faire, states' rights, eugenics, and creationism, and to find vindication for this farrago in the fact that 17 percent of the eligible electorate voted for Republicans in November's congressional elections, that is their prerogative. My political principles, and those of a number of other young intellectuals who once wrote for journals like COMMENTARY but would no longer dream of doing so, remain those of a Teddy Roosevelt Progressive of 1915, a New Deal liberal of 1935, a cold-war liberal of 1955—or a neoconservative of 1975.

MICHAEL LIND
New Republic
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

I was gratified to see that my article in the *New York Review* helped prompt Norman Podhoretz to conclude that Pat Robertson has indeed peddled anti-Semitic canards in his best-selling book. I am, however, puzzled by his depiction of Michael Lind's initial exposure of Robertson's ugly beliefs as a purely personal crusade fueled by an obsession with social issues. Not only does Mr. Podhoretz's attempt to divine the hidden wellsprings of Lind's antipathy toward Robertson contradict his own observation a few paragraphs earlier that "surely in politics it is actions and not motives that count," but it also reduces the Robertson affair to a mere grudge match. I think that there is more to it than that.

What the case of Robertson has notably revealed is that neoconservatives have adopted a no-enemies-to-the-Right policy. The first reaction of neoconservatives, after all, was to pooh-pooh the notion that Robertson's book was replete with anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. Mr. Podhoretz concedes this point, but goes on to defend Robertson partly in the form of denouncing Lind's denunciation of neoconservatism in the socialist journal *Dissent*.

Having worked at the *National Interest* (before Lind's tenure at the magazine) and occasionally contributed to COMMENTARY, it is my impression that, if anything, Lind soft-pedaled the decrepitude of neoconservatism in the *Dissent* piece that Mr. Podhoretz declares goes "nowhere" but devotes several paragraphs to assailing. No one with a modicum of intellectual curiosity could fail to realize after a few years that to join neoconservatism was to join a junior-league Comintern whose members were pledged to follow slavishly its every twist and turn. The result was a steady psychological ratcheting up of the stakes in which initiates were expected to prove their fealty to the cause by embracing ever more outlandish propositions—helping the poor always hurts the poor, global warming benefits the environment, blacks are genetically inferior to whites—or face expulsion.

Now Mr. Podhoretz would have us believe that Robertson's noisy support for Israel demonstrates that he is anything but an anti-Semite. In arriving at this judgment, he invokes the rabbinic rule of *batel b'shishim*, that "if the contaminant has slipped in [to a permitted food] accidentally or unintentionally, and is no more than one-sixtieth of the whole, it is neutralized and the food can be lawfully eaten." There has been nothing accidental about the contamination of neoconservatism by the radical Right. Norman Podhoretz and the remnants of the movement he once commanded are beyond redemption.

JACOB HEILBRUNN
Somerville, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz misrepresents the Anti-Defamation League's position when he claims that our 1994 report on the religious Right offered "the most broadly based statement of the case for regarding [Pat] Robertson as an anti-Semite."

The ADL made no such case. We do not believe Robertson to be anti-Semitic and did not argue that he is. In fact, the concerns we raised are similar to those noted by Mr. Podhoretz himself. We cited statements by Robertson that we deemed "antagonistic toward Jews." Mr. Podhoretz also cites a number of these remarks, arguing that Robertson has resorted to a "threatening tone" and "intimidation" in his pronouncements about Jews. We expressed alarm about the conspiratorial outlook and certain anti-Semitic sources of Robertson's book, *The New World Order*; so does Mr. Podhoretz.

One can air concerns about troubling statements and views without accusing their source of being

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an anti-Semite. With regard to Pat Robertson, that is precisely what the ADL's religious Right report did—no more, no less.

ABRAHAM H. FOXMAN
National Director
Anti-Defamation League
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

. . . Norman Podhoretz suggests that Pat Robertson must be a "new breed of anti-Semite," implying that you cannot be an anti-Semite and also a supporter of Israel. Indeed, Robertson is a new breed. It has taken only 48 years, the length of time Israel has been in existence, for the world to have developed this new breed. The birth of Israel for Robertson is one step closer to the fulfillment of apocalyptic theology . . . , in which the return of the Jews to the Promised Land is a necessary prelude to the "second coming" of Jesus and the ultimate conversion of the Jews to Christianity. If that is Robertson's motivation, Mr. Podhoretz says, it is all right with him. . . .

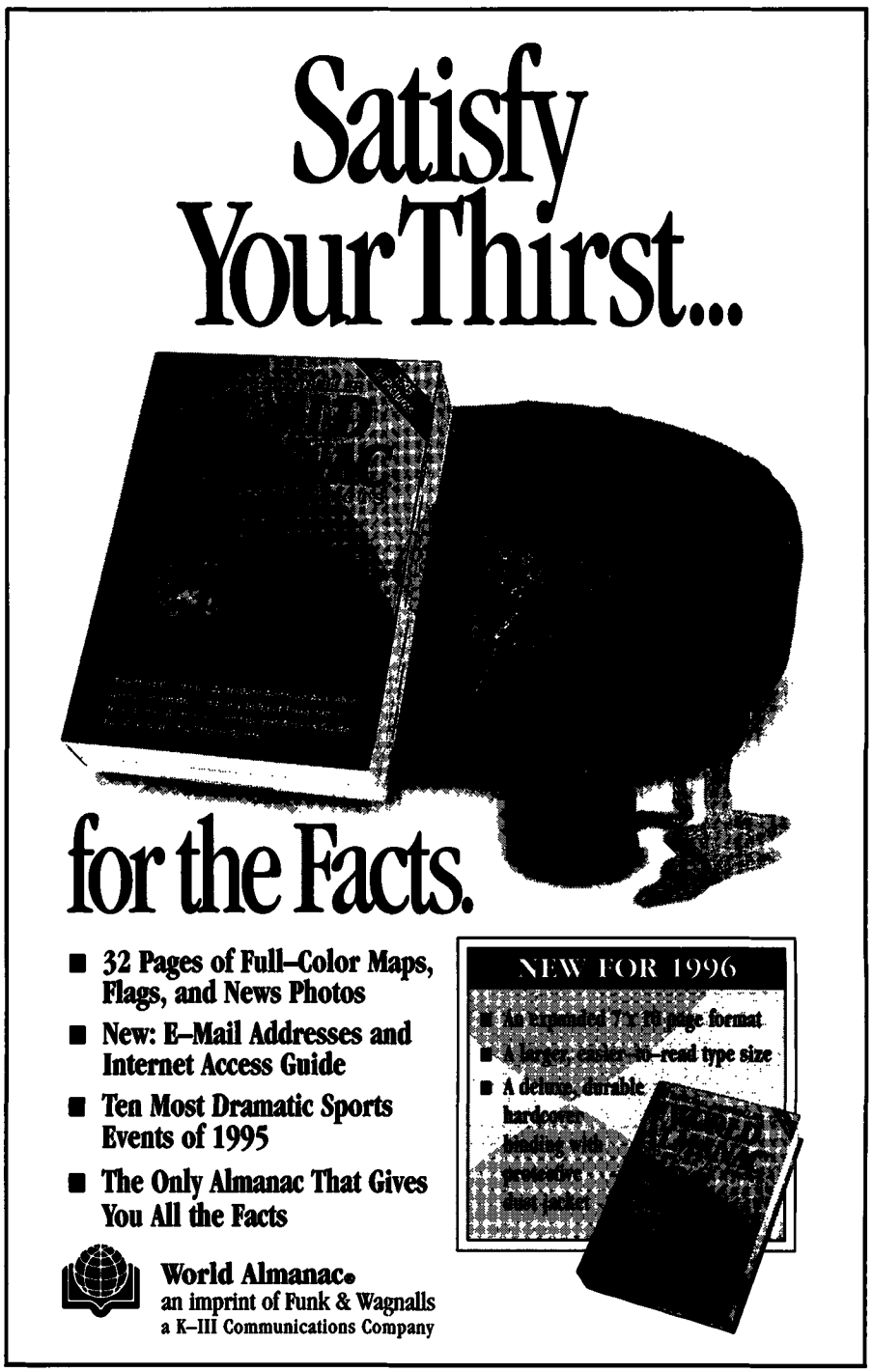
Mr. Podhoretz advises us that "in politics it is actions and not motives that count." I think we should be spared this kind of blind faith in someone who "knowingly or unknowingly" spouts anti-Semitism.

DANIEL M. GRODEN
Water Mill, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

While I agree that Pat Robertson is not the demonic figure some left-wing interest groups and pundits portray him as, I think there are some questions which need to be answered before any final judgment can be made. . . .

In the *Wall Street Journal* (April 12) Robertson took strong exception to critics who accused him of endorsing or promoting anti-Semitic themes and sources. He stated categorically that *The New World Order* "embraced no conspiracy theories" and employed "no anti-Semitic code words." One wonders if Robertson has read his own book! For example, in the chapter "The Power Behind the Bolsheviks," he asserts a "commonality of interest between left-wing Bolsheviks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and right-wing monopolistic capitalists," and he insists that understanding this link is crucial "fully [to] comprehend the last 70 years of world history [and] the ongoing movement toward world government." At this point, he introduces readers to Nesta Webster, whom he lamely describes as a "British author," and he recommends her research on "subversive movements" and "secret societies."

In truth, Nesta Webster was the doyenne of right-wing conspiracy theorists and her writings have been preeminent in shaping conspiratorial thinking in the English-speaking world. Chapter titles in her 1924 book, *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements*, include "The Jewish Cabalists" and "The Real Jewish Peril." . . . In 1926 she wrote a pamphlet entitled "The Need for Fascism in Great Britain." Later . . . she derided British press reports concerning the persecution of German Jews and observed: "That Hitler is doing the best thing for Germany seems at present undeniable."

In the United States the most prominent devotees and promoters of Webster's books and ideas have been the John Birch Society, William Dudley Pelley (Silver Shirts), the Liberty Lobby, the Omni/Christian Book Club. . . .

Robertson also cites a 1983 book by Eustace Mullins as a resource for understanding the history and significance of the Federal Reserve. This book merely updates Mullins's 1954 exposition entitled *The Federal Reserve Conspiracy*, published by the Christian Educational Association (CEA). In 1954, the House Un-American Affairs Committee (HUAC) described the CEA as a "clearinghouse for hate propaganda throughout the country." Mullins's sentiments may be limned from his March 1955 article in *Women's Voice* entitled "Why Do the Jews Hate America?" and from his October 1952 contribution to the National Renaissance party bulletin entitled "Adolf Hitler: An Appreciation." . . .

So we are left with an enigma: how did Robertson come across the writings of Webster and Mullins, and why does he cite them in his bibliography as authoritative sources? Mr. Podhoretz suggests that he might not be familiar with their ideas, but possibly relied on a research assistant who provided him with the material without its anti-Semitic context. Why, then, do their themes pervade his own scheme of things, and why does he heartily defend writers "who expose subversive secret organizations" while dismissing critics as ignorant simpletons oblivious to the centuries-old nefarious plans of Freemasonry and the Illuminati?

Unless and until Robertson provides answers to these questions, I do not think we can blithely accept the proposition that his pro-Israel position is indicative of his underlying beliefs.

ERNIE LAZAR
San Francisco, California

TO THE EDITOR:

In his apologia for Pat Robertson, Norman Podhoretz quotes Robertson on church-state relations: "I agree that church and state should be separated. . . . [These are] my most personal beliefs and my most fundamental convictions."

This is hardly congruent with another statement of Robertson's:

> The Constitution of the United States . . . is a marvelous document for self-government by Christian people. But the minute you turn the document into the hands of non-Christian people and atheistic people, they can use it to destroy the very foundation of our society. And that's what's been happening. [*Washington Post*, March 21, 1981, cited in the ADL report, *The Religious Right*]

Nor is the sentence quoted by Mr. Podhoretz in line with Robertson's triumphant cry after the 1980 elections: "Christians have enough votes to run the country!"

That Robertson is anti-Semitic may still be open to question; that he is prevaricating cannot possibly be. In his article, Mr. Podhoretz implies that in evaluating Robertson's deeply held beliefs American Jews should find comfort in the fact that his pro-Israel stance outweighs his Christian agenda for this nation. In this, as the years ahead will show, I fear that Mr. Podhoretz is very much mistaken.

PETER JOHN KIRSCH
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR:

For the last twenty years I have subscribed to COMMENTARY, agreeing for the most part with its overall stand on issues and paying particular attention to the incisive analyses of Norman Podhoretz. But I am flabbergasted by his exculpatory article on Pat Robertson. By any litmus test, the references to Jewish cabals in Robertson's book, however thinly disguised, qualify him as the most pernicious sort of anti-Semite, more so than the openly hostile Joseph Sobran or Pat Buchanan. . . . Robertson has a large audience, not in the least given to hair-splitting, which will accept his message at face value. . . .

I have met, and would be surprised if Mr. Podhoretz has not also met, people favorably disposed to Israel who at the same time believe in the most outlandish Jewish conspiracies and strivings for world domination. I consider such people to be dangerously anti-Semitic. Conversely, if a person opposes Israel and opposes me politically but is free of beliefs in perfidious Jewish cabals, in my book he is not an anti-Semite. . . .

MORDECAI SHELEF
Bloomfield Village, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR:

As regular subscriber and reader since Elliot E. Cohen began COMMENTARY 50 years ago, I feel entitled to express my dismay at Norman Podhoretz's article. . . . There is something disgustingly obsequious about Mr. Podhoretz's attempt to laugh off Pat Robertson's anti-Semitic mouthings, and to do so in the name of an alleged friendship toward Israel is simply absurd! As the saying goes, "With friends like these. . . ."

JACOB WEISSMAN
Chilmark, Massachusetts

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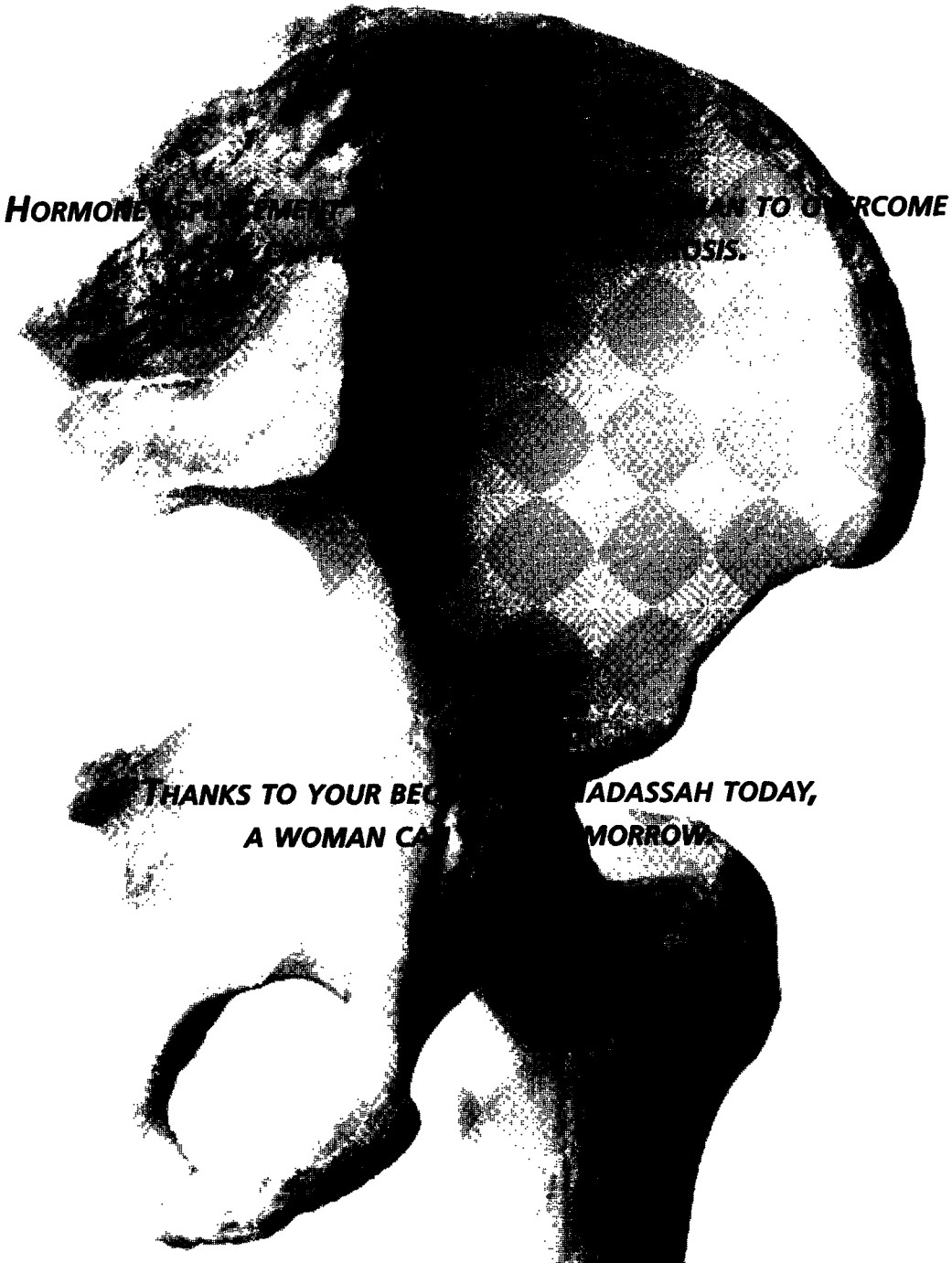

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TO THE EDITOR:

. . . It is true that if one were to define an anti-Semite only as someone who hates Jews, Pat Robertson would not be classified as anti-Semitic. However, I believe that the correct definition is far broader: the term should be extended to include those who place all Jews in one basket and then proceed to make generalizations about them that are unsupported by fact. . . . For example: Jews control international finance; Jews control the media; Jews control Hollywood; Jews act in unison because they belong to an unnamed secret international organization; etc.

Applying this criterion to Pat Robertson, I conclude that he is quite clearly anti-Semitic. Nevertheless, I would still commend his support for Israel and would work to cement closer links and lines of communication with him and his organization.

SAMUEL ZOMBER
Woodmere, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz begins his article by asking if Pat Robertson "is guilty of the charge of anti-Semitism that has lately been hurled at him," and then supplies enough evidence in his article for me to answer "yes." . . . Before reading the article, I had viewed Robertson as a friend of Israel who might also help end welfare statism in the United States. Without the benefit of Mr. Podhoretz's close analysis, I had rated Robertson as a man of slight intellect but strong principles. . . . His problems appeared to me to be the result of nothing more than the now-standard dishonest treatment from the majority of journalists whose political beliefs are at odds with his. Therefore, I felt that he had been ill-used and was not an embarrassment to a Jewish political conservative like me.

Now, at best, Robertson appears to me to be schizophrenic in his convictions. On the one hand, he blames Jews disproportionately for the world's ills, but he also gives money and lends his influence to Jewish causes. At worst, he appears to have in mind something like the PLO's "phased plan" for the destruction of Israel. Although Jews might not worry about a "second coming," I wonder what might happen if Robertson were to become impatient for the apocalypse or disturbed by the welfare-state politics of the state of Israel and used his influence and money accordingly. . . .

Though my new view of Pat Robertson would not make me vote for a liberal Democrat, or cause me to vote against a sound Republican candidate, . . . it makes me more pessimistic about the future of Jews in America. . . .

BARRY A. SOLOMON
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Like Norman Podhoretz I, too, come down on the side of Pat Robertson, albeit for a different reason. Certainly Robertson's actions on behalf of Israel and Jews generally far outweigh his grotesque beliefs in Jewish participation in anti-American and anti-Christian conspiracies. But I cannot help remembering the contrast between Martin Luther's early writings about Jews, both supportive and complimentary, and his later writings which are among the most vicious anti-Semitic expressions in history. It is impossible to believe that Luther changed so radically; rather, he changed when he realized he was going to be no more successful in converting the Jews than his Catholic predecessors had been.

Robertson's expressions of support for Jews may well be sincere (I certainly hope so), but while Mr. Podhoretz notes that the late Nathan Perlmutter, when he was national director of the ADL, said he was content to wait until the Messiah comes to see how it all turns out, I am not certain the Christian Right will also be so content.

The Christian theology Robertson embraces regarding Jews, as Mr. Podhoretz points out, is largely without precedent in the last 2,000 years. It must surely be at least possible that it will be jettisoned as quickly as it was adopted when it appears, to the Robertsons and to others, that Jews want no more part of his new Christian theology than they did of the old.

As an Orthodox Jew I look at things just a little differently. Until the coming of the Messiah, we Jews will be in exile and will be, in large measure, at the mercy of the nations of the world. For us, there are no permanently safe ports, and all we can do is our best at the moment, which for now means accepting gratefully the support of Pat Robertson. But I suggest we sleep with one eye open.

YEHUDA ROSTKER
Far Rockaway, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz should be congratulated for his willingness to break with political correctness and his refusal to demonize Pat Robertson. Christians are no longer the enemies of the Jews; it is Louis Farrakhan, who represents both Muslim hatred of Israel and virulent anti-Semitism, who is the real problem. . . .

Mr. Podhoretz's article is a first step in opening up a dialogue with the Christian Coalition that has been sorely lacking. . . . Both religious Jews and religious Christians emphasize family values, education, morality, the work ethic, and prayer. . . . Jews have nothing to fear from an open discussion or display of religion in the public arena. . . .

There has always been a fear that association with the majority religion would corrupt, discourage, and undermine the faith of young Jews. But experience has shown that secular liberalism has done more in the last 50 years to undermine Judaism among the young than centuries of oppression by forces far worse than the majority Christian religion in the United States. . . .

JERALD UDINSKY
Oakland, California

TO THE EDITOR:

I have been watching Pat Robertson's *700 Club* on TV for several years since my retirement and, although not influenced by his religious message, I

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admire the sincerity of his faith. I was disappointed when, after his spell in the political arena, Robertson displayed impatience with people who did not accept some of his positions, yet I have never heard him make anti-Semitic remarks. If some appear in his writings, then I agree with Norman Podhoretz that they touch on Jewish sensitivity. There is in our memory a recollection of centuries of persecution ranging from the polemics of the Church fathers through Martin Luther to events in the present century. . . .

It is regrettable that a trace of the old, outdated rhetoric has drifted into Pat Robertson's writings. I agree with Mr. Podhoretz that the offending remarks . . . may have been brought to Robertson by eager assistants, and that his failure to recognize the blunder may have been due to his lack of familiarity with some historical facts which, for Christians, are painful to remember. The inevitable backlash by writers, Jewish and non-Jewish, may have been an overreaction. We owe thanks to Norman Podhoretz for his balanced analysis and his fairness to Pat Robertson, whom we may still consider a friend of the Jews.

CHARLES TERNER
Newton, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

As a Roman Catholic, I have long felt a familial tie to Judaism, as a younger brother might feel toward his elder brother. My experience has been that this sentiment among Christians is becoming more common, though it would be stretching matters to say that Pat Buchanan is an exceptional case. I can attest, however, to the accuracy of the statement by Father Richard John Neuhaus, quoted by Mr. Podhoretz in his article, that an understanding has grown of "Christianity's dependence [upon] . . . the living Judaism that continues in mysterious relation to God's election and unbreakable promise." Pat Robertson, and others of the Christian Coalition, may very well share that understanding.

JEFFREY C. SCHARFEN
Santa Rosa, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz really took me back when he spoke about the public school he attended in the 30's . . . where he sang Christian hymns not knowing what the words meant. . . .

I attended Washington Irving high school in New York City in the 40's. . . . Each Christmas, I remember singing (and quite enjoying . . .) "Oh! Come All Ye Faithful." Anyone familiar with this hymn knows it ends with the words—"Oh! Come let us adore him/Oh! Come let us adore him/Oh! Come let us adore him"—that was when I stopped singing and the Christians in the auditorium went on to sing "Christ the lord." Nobody ever noticed I had stopped singing, nor did I ever feel peculiar for doing so. It was not expected that children of other faiths should mouth words that were inimical to what they believed in.

There is a lot of talk now that if prayer were introduced into schools today, children who did not participate would be afraid of being thought "different" or of being resented. But being "different" and respecting others' differences are what it means to be citizens of a democracy. If we can no longer accept this, then we are on the slippery slope to tyranny. . . .

JANICE WIJNEN
Rego Park, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Congratulations to Norman Podhoretz on his excellent piece on Pat Robertson, which is written with his customary grace and clarity.

ROBERT JASTROW
Mount Wilson Institute
Pasadena, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz delivers a sensible and cogent defense against the charges of anti-Semitism which continue to haunt Pat Robertson and cloud relations between Jews and Christian conservatives. Neither Robertson's crackpot historical theories nor his evocations of a "Christian America" are the real source of so much Jewish-liberal animosity. Most liberal Jews have not read Robertson's books, they do not listen to his broadcasts, they do not attend his sermons, they do not read Michael Lind, Michael Kinsley, or ADL reports. They only know that Robertson is opposed to abortion, gay rights, and most of the liberal agenda, and accusations of anti-Semitism simply feed their existing hatred. Robertson's long history of staunch support for Israel will not dissuade them.

In fact, liberal Jews have been very measured in their criticism of anti-Semites on the political Left. And they have been sickeningly tolerant and trusting of Israel's enemies. . . .

RUTH S. KING
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz is right on every count, and since he has had no problem calling other conservatives like Pat Buchanan and Joseph Sobran anti-Semites, he has earned credibility on this issue.

Let us be honest. The reason many Jews want to label Pat Robertson an anti-Semite is that he is the leader of a movement that is gradually eroding post-1965 liberalism, the religion of most American Jews. Mr. Podhoretz's application of the talmudic rule of *batel b'shishim* is valid and productive. The problem, however, is that most Jews do not consider anything Robertson does kosher; if they did, they would largely ignore his foolish remarks about European bankers and the like. Moreover, we Jews should forgive people—whether on the Left or Right—when they sincerely apologize. . . .

The attitude of most American Jews toward Christians is a mirror-image of most American blacks' attitude toward whites: a paralysis of memory. It is important to remember history, but remembering is one thing and allowing memory to blind one to reality is another. Most blacks do not want to acknowledge that most whites have changed; for example, in her inaugural address, the new head of the NAACP said

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that there is no difference between American racism today and when the NAACP was founded in the first decade of the 20th century. Similarly, most Jews do not want to acknowledge the profound change among most Christians, especially in America.

I have lectured in Jewish communities where rabbis have told me that the local Jewish groups ignored salute-to-Israel rallies because they were held under the auspices of Christian fundamentalists. Jews will mortgage their homes to send their children to study under anti-Israel professors at elite universities; and they will continue to support institutions like Columbia University (where I attended graduate school) despite the virtual absence of administration and faculty condemnation of a *Der Stuermer*-like article by a black student in the campus newspaper. Yet Jews will boycott *loving* endeavors by conservative Christians who have never voiced a single anti-Jewish or anti-Israel sentiment.

It is true that many Jews feel great kinship with the views of the *New York Times*, but some feel more kinship with the values of the Christian Coalition. I am among the latter and believe that either the movement spawned by such Christians will save America or the country will drown. A Jewry not paralyzed by visions of the Inquisition, the Crusades, and Christian-inspired pogroms would in fact embrace many of the Christian Coalition's values, or, at the very least, accord these people respectful attention. . . .

DENNIS PRAGER
Ultimate Issues
Los Angeles, California

NORMAN PODHORETZ writes:

At a time when the air is filled with denunciations of the Jewish religious Right for the extremist rhetoric of its attacks on political opponents, it is useful to be reminded that such rhetoric is at least equally characteristic of the secular Left, especially when the target is the religious Right or anyone friendly to it.

Thus, in my article on Pat Robertson I said that the former neoconservative Michael Lind, in signing on with the Left, had

> revived one of its most ignoble traditions in charging that it was out of the lust for foundation gold and political power, and not out of principle or moral concern, that conservative intellectuals had become friendly toward the Christian Right.

Yet not even Mr. Lind's scurrilities (many of them recycled in his letter above, with a few new ones thrown in for good measure) went far enough for his fellow refugee from neoconservatism, Jacob Heilbrunn. "If anything," Mr. Heilbrunn writes, "Lind soft-pedaled the decrepitude of neoconservatism." Determined to avoid such pussyfooting (no more nice guy he), Mr. Heilbrunn goes on to offer what he considers a more accurate description of neoconservatism as "a junior-league Comintern" whose "contamination . . . by the radical Right" has placed it "beyond redemption."

To detect the motive behind language like this (not to mention the fact that Messrs. Lind and Heilbrunn devote so much more space to vilifying the neoconservatives for having become anti-liberal all across the board and so little to challenging my defense of Robertson), there is no need to rely on "mental telepathy." Anyone with a reasonably well-trained critical eye and a bit of common sense will immediately see that both Michael Lind and Jacob Heilbrunn are using the charge of anti-Semitism mainly to discredit the social and political agenda of the Right while smearing their former mentors and patrons with guilt by association.

Nor is the precise chronological order in which The Collected Works of Michael Lind were composed of such earthshaking importance as he imagines. The only things that matter are the sequence in which the two pieces I singled out for discussion were published—and there of course I did "get the dates right"—and the relative impact they made, which I also got right. (I did, however, get the title of one of these imperishable masterpieces slightly wrong. *Mea maxima culpa.*)

Messrs. Lind and Heilbrunn are both talented young men, but the sad truth is that in migrating to the Left they have sunk to a level of intellectual vulgarity that I do not recall either of them exhibiting when they were still under the tutelage of the neoconservative elders on whom they have now so ferociously turned. I am not easily shocked by such things, but I must admit that I was taken aback by the coarseness of their summaries of what neoconservatism stands for (with Mr. Heilbrunn once again outdoing Mr. Lind): these malicious caricatures would be unworthy even of an unusually cheap left-wing demagogue. And it is certain that when they were eagerly trying to write for COMMENTARY they would not have been allowed to get away with the kind of intellectual dishonesty they permit themselves here in the desperate effort to score polemical points.

For example, they both accuse me and other neoconservatives of adopting a "cynical no-enemies-to-the-Right" policy. Yet, as they must know, when the so-called paleoconservatives some years ago began pushing a nativist line, the neoconservatives split with them in no uncertain terms. Moreover, as they also know (and as Dennis Prager notes above), it was in this very magazine that the case for denouncing right-wingers like Pat Buchanan and Joseph Sobran as anti-Semites was most fully and carefully developed. In fact, after absolving Robertson of anti-Semitism in the very article to which they are responding, I end with the following sentence: "If only the same thing could be said of the other Pat, the secular one, who has now, alas, become rather more prominent on the Right than Robertson himself." So much for a "no-enemies-to-the-Right" policy.

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Another sign of intellectual dishonesty is the refusal to acknowledge and then contend with the differences between Pat Robertson and Louis Farrakhan (differences which, as I showed in my article, are not confined to the issue of Israel, decisive though that is). Of this refusal the Anti-Defamation League turns out not to be guilty. Like many other readers of its report on the religious Right, I came away with the impression that the ADL, which had rightly attacked Farrakhan as an anti-Semite, was lodging the same charge against Robertson. But I am glad to see from Abraham H. Foxman's letter that the ADL agrees with me in concluding that Robertson is not in fact an anti-Semite.

Daniel M. Groden, Ernie Lazar, Mordecai Shelef, and Samuel Zomber all elaborate on points I myself made and then took into account in rendering my verdict on the charge of anti-Semitism against Robertson. Clearly I did not succeed in persuading them that Robertson's crackpot conspiracy theories, his reliance on books by Nesta Webster and Eustace Mullins, and his apocalyptic theological expectations concerning the ultimate conversion of the Jews are far outweighed by his political, moral, and financial support for Israel (as well as for other Jewish causes). Since I have nothing new to add, I will not attempt to persuade them now. I would, however, like to register my view that the Jews have enemies enough without looking for another in a man who, whatever his ideas about the distant past and the remote future, professes and concretely demonstrates friendship for them and solicitude for their interests in the present.

Peter John Kirsch raises the question of whether Robertson is really committed to the separation of church and state and cites statements that are at odds with the passage I quoted on that issue. Here again, as with Robertson's crackpot theories, I myself alluded to such statements and took them into account. Since, as Mr. Kirsch indicates, they were made back in 1980-81, whereas the one I highlighted dates from a year or so ago, he assumes that Robertson is now "prevaricating." But I think, giving Robertson the benefit of the doubt (and why should we not?), that there has been an evolution in his thinking. That is, he has moved away from his earlier notions of America as a "Christian nation" and toward a better understanding of the First Amendment, though one that permits much more latitude for religious expression in the public square than most Jews (mistakenly, in my opinion) believe desirable.

Finally, I want to thank Jacob Weissman, Barry A. Solomon, Yehuda Rostker, Jerald Udinsky, Charles Terner, Jeffrey C. Scharfen, Janice Wijnen, Robert Jastrow, Ruth S. King, and Dennis Prager for their thoughtful and generous remarks.

Race & Jazz

TO THE EDITOR:

Under the guise of shining light on an important issue, Terry Teachout ["The Color of Jazz," September], has revealed a rather dim and cliché-filled vision of the jazz world. First, he bemoans the release of a recent collection of jazz recordings, *Black Legends of Jazz*, which, he says, . . . chronicles a new low in racial divisiveness. Does he not know about the mid-60's, when racial stratification in jazz was far more pronounced than it is now?

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And what of the *Black Giants of Jazz* album that Columbia issued in the 70's?

Of greater significance is Mr. Teachout's trashing of two of our most eloquent writers, Albert Murray and Stanley Crouch, both of whom have done so much to foster a more honest . . . union between blacks and whites. If Murray . . . chose to focus on black artists in his book, *Stomping the Blues*, so what? If, in this estimable tome, he wished to explore the blues, why not deal with the folks who created the blues? Murray's analysis of the transmutation of the blues from a twelve-bar structure which began as accompaniment to a rigorously unsentimental world view into a marvelously coherent and profound vision of black life in America is a great accomplishment. . . .

Mr. Teachout then accuses Stanley Crouch of a sort of schizophrenia in his writing about jazz, something that is not borne out by even a cursory perusal of Crouch's work. For example, . . . the following (from *New Perspectives on Jazz*, Smithsonian Press, 1990):

> Human meaning and human value are what make an idiom universal, nothing else. Specific stylistic estimates are the things that create individual, idiomatic identity, and style is inevitably a code for the perception of human life and human meaning in a particular context. When Leontyne Price performs *Tosca*, what we observe is that Italian opera is so inclusive that a Negro from Laurel, Mississippi, can meet its requirements and express her own artistic identity as well. Parallel truths are witnessed when we hear a white musician play good jazz, or when we listen to a Gypsy named Django Reinhardt light up the guitar. . . .

Are these the words of a "racialist," as Mr. Teachout brands both Crouch and Murray? . . .

As for Murray, Mr. Teachout does not mention any of his other books, the most noticeable omission being the classic *The Omni-Americans*. So as not to distort the record, Mr. Teachout should have addressed all of Murray's work. . . .

I believe that the basic impetus behind jazz was a black one, albeit a black American one. Instead of hurling the "racialist" epithet, why isn't Mr. Teachout equally incensed about the exclusion of the black contribution to other American genres in which blacks have been influential? One example: humor. So much of it is derived from Negro sources (subsequently distorted into minstrelsy), yet the "face" of American humor is not usually conceived of as a black one.

Given the upwardly mobile ladder jazz still represents to the black community in this age of gangsta rap, Bob Dole, crack, Rush Limbaugh, and the rest, I find it hard to cavil at what the Jazz at Lincoln Center concert series (directed by Wynton Marsalis, with Stanley Crouch as artistic adviser) has done to accomplish its goals. One of these, the integration (not only racially but across the board) of the core audience has been wonderful to witness. Another, the hope offered to black kids that jazz may be just the thing to increase what are their still small odds of leaving their disadvantaged neighborhoods, makes me want to be a little more lenient about what the jazz program at Lincoln Center stands for.

I understand the problem some musicians (and writers) . . . have with the relatively recent resurgence of the more traditional forms of jazz. For decades this repertoire was the exclusive domain of white players—Ruby Braff, Kenny Davern, Dick Wellstood, Don Ewell. . . . Now, all of a sudden, this music has been discovered by a slew of young, mostly black players who have gotten an inordinate amount of publicity (one wishes Dick Wellstood could have received even a meager portion of it during his lifetime). . . .

There will continue to be dues paid on both sides of the racial coin until things work themselves out—after all, we are still only a blink away from slavery in the true timetable of existence.

I share Mr. Teachout's fervor in championing Benny Goodman, Stan Getz, Dave Tough, Jack Teagarden, and other white players as jazz musicians with no superiors (save Louis Armstrong). But I also know that they all gave credit where credit was due as to what this music is about, and where it came from. Ultimately, what we love about them is their personal way of expressing themselves in this American musical dialect, one that they all acknowledged was at first truly black and is now truly American.

LOREN SCHOENBERG
The New School
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Terry Teachout fails to substantiate his charge that Stanley Crouch and Wynton Marsalis are guilty of racial discrimination. It is clear that Mr. Teachout rejects Crouch's and Marsalis's beliefs that the roots of jazz are firmly planted in blues and swing, and that jazz musicians who fail to incorporate blues and swing into their music are playing a diluted form of jazz. Apparently Mr. Teachout's motto is *de gustibus non est disputandum*.

Mr. Teachout notes that Marsalis was "one of a number of stylistically conservative players of the late 70's and early 80's who rejected the avant-garde techniques of the 60's in favor of a 'neoclassical' approach." Yet rather than confront the neoclassicists' sense of aesthetics, he hurls the charge of racism at his ideological foes. In their stewardship of the jazz department at Lincoln Center, Marsalis and Crouch discriminate against both white and black musicians who fail to incorporate blues and swing into their music.

Throughout his article, Mr. Teachout is forced to make a string of admissions that ultimately undercut his charge of racial discrimination. He points out that "ever since he began giving interviews in

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the early 80's [Marsalis] has been quick to criticize other musicians, notably Miles Davis and Sonny Rollins, for 'selling out' to commercial music." And in addition to black jazz musicians, Marsalis also criticizes black rap artists. Mr. Teachout must also admit that Marsalis "uses white players both in the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and in his own groups."

Mr. Teachout has not demonstrated that Lincoln Center's institutional bias flows from racism. In a feeble attempt to prove that Marsalis discriminates against musicians on the basis of race, Mr. Teachout relies on disparate impact, a nonargument favored by many civil-rights advocacy groups. He relies on the following reasoning: "the ratio of concert dates in [Jazz at Lincoln Center] . . . has consistently been in the neighborhood of ten black musicians to one white." Consequently, he says, Marsalis has discriminated against white musicians. This type of soft-headed argument has been effective on university campuses, but it will not make much headway in the jazz community. Mr. Teachout would have been on stronger ground if he had demonstrated that there is a large number of highly qualified white jazz neoclassicists who cannot get work with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. The inference of racial discrimination can arise only after such facts have been established.

Mr. Teachout states that the young jazz neoclassicists known as the "Young Lions" have "one thing in common: their race." He ignores the obvious fact that these musicians share a common vision of jazz, a vision that Mr. Teachout does not share. Jazz musicians and critics have had ideological wars over the canon for decades. These heated debates are welcome because jazz evolves through honest debate. Rather than engage the jazz community in a debate over the merits of the neoclassicists' approach to jazz, Mr. Teachout chose to malign the character of men who have played a central role in revitalizing jazz.

LINDA CHAVEZ
GERALD A. REYNOLDS
Center for Equal Opportunity
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

Terry Teachout's premise of reverse racialism in contemporary jazz founders on a basic misconception. . . . While race relations in the jazz world have certainly been more enlightened than in the broader society, the racially idealized environment Mr. Teachout describes never existed. The facts are (and this should not have to be repeated) that the integrated bands Mr. Teachout refers to were a rare exception and the black musicians in these bands could not stay in the same hotels or eat in the same restaurants as their white counterparts. (Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway circumvented segregation by traveling in private Pullman railroad cars.) Nor was integration common in the recording studio, although an integrated group of musicians did record as early as 1923. Local musicians' unions also were racially segregated until about 30 years ago, and few black musicians were able to penetrate the lucrative radio, television, and film-studio orchestras.

Furthermore, Mr. Teachout's implication that whites have played a role equivalent to blacks in the stylistic progression of jazz is simply not so. The primary stylistic innovators in jazz from its beginnings have been almost exclusively African-Americans. . . . Many white musicians have played jazz with proficiency and brilliance of the first rank, but they popularized and profited from interpreting styles that African-American musicians created. . . .

In connection with Jazz at Lincoln Center, Mr. Teachout's contention that "contemporary white composers [have not] been commissioned to write original pieces for the full orchestra" has some validity (although one can cite commissioned work by Gerry Mulligan and Joe Lovano). The problem with these commissions has been less racial exclusion than the unreadiness of the awardees to fulfill their requisite task. Others have taken issue with Jazz at Lincoln Center's exclusion of the music of contemporary jazz musicians, white and black, who navigate the music's speculative realm such as Cecil Taylor, Anthony Davis, and the late Julius Hemphill. But Mr. Teachout's primary complaint that at Jazz at Lincoln Center "the historic contributions of earlier white players, composers, and arrangers are systematically ignored" is absurd. . . .

Whether Wynton Marsalis and Stanley Crouch hold the views expressed in the isolated statements Mr. Teachout cites is open to debate. What is not debatable is that in a virtual vacuum they have worked to deepen public understanding of jazz and to inspire younger musicians to play it. The talent pool for jazz is larger today than it has been since the 1950's, but its audience is limited and largely ignorant of the music's legacy. A well-informed audience can construct a clearer aesthetic. When the history of jazz is understood as thoroughly by its critics as Western classical music, literature, cinema, and the visual arts are understood by theirs, we can have clearer discussions about the issues Mr. Teachout is concerned with.

Instead, we have "The Color of Jazz," where half-truths are posited as authentic facts. One may reserve judgment on the youth-centered marketing strategies of recording labels and regret that a white artist of Phil Woods's caliber is not signed to a recording contract with a major label. But Jimmy Heath, Benny Golson, and Cedar Walton, three sixty-ish black artists of arguably greater stature than Woods, are also unsigned. . . .

Race cliquishness and interracial fraternity coexist in contemporary jazz as they always have. . . . Mr. Teachout could have raised his criticisms of contemporary jazz politics without distorting the painful realities of the music's history. While crying reverse racism, "The Col-

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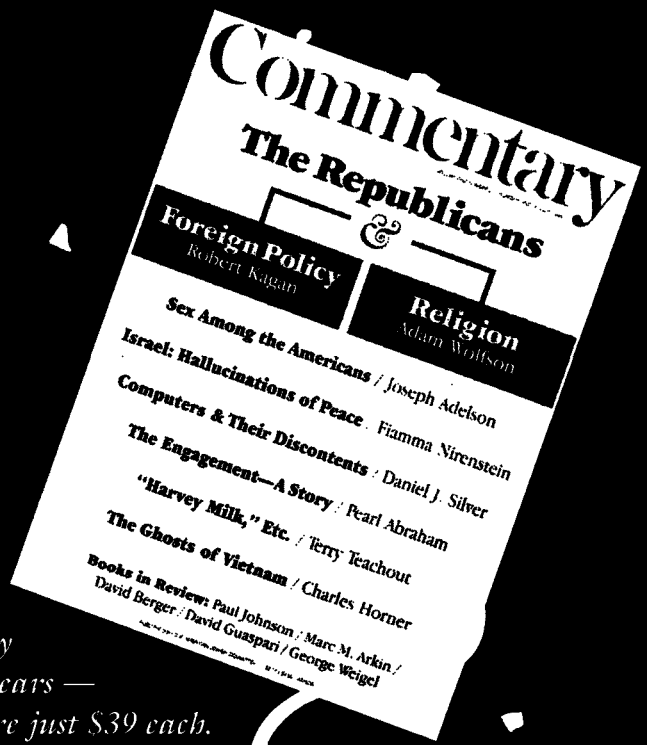
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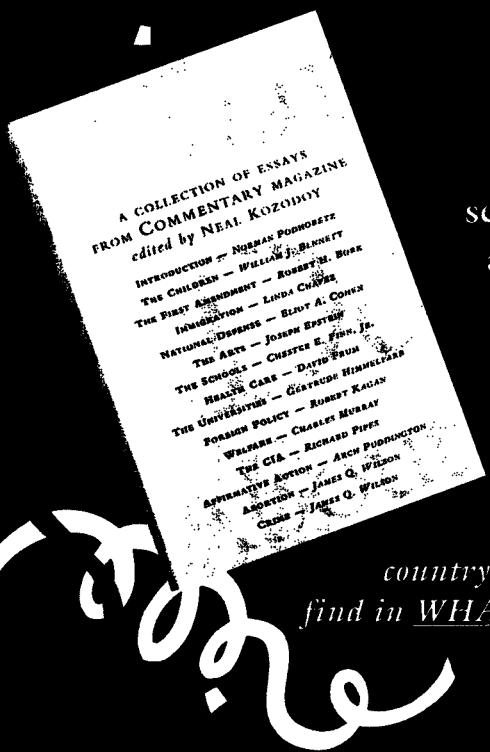
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or of Jazz" deals the "race card" from the very bottom of the deck.

TED PANKEN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

. . . How would mainstream jazz be any different today if all the glorious B's–Bix (Beiderbecke), Bunny (Berigan), Bill (Evans), (Dave) Brubeck–had never played? How much would anyone's record shelf be shortened? To my ear, only Stan Getz, and perhaps Bill Evans, created original music. . . . Of the "Afro" masters, only Lester Young claimed that he had been influenced by a white player. . . .

There is no denying the fact that great white players had an important effect on jazz history. But their importance might not have come from their playing so much as from their success in legitimizing the music and thereby attracting other whites . . . as listeners, critics, and promoters.

Jazz is a distinctly Afro music, but it is distinguished from other Afro music by the unique racial mix of its audience. Jazz is an uncommon style and developed only in those few times and places where local custom and politics allowed mixed audiences. Performing for Afro audiences, Afro players have tended toward the same ritual expressions of bawdiness, misogyny, and machismo typical of much popular Afro entertainment. But the presence of even a few whites in the audience (or even if whites, especially critics or promoters, were only anticipated), in effect "kept the musicians honest" and challenged them to greater invention, skill, and even art.

So we find that whites . . . played a vital role in advancing jazz through appreciation, discernment, support, and promotion—all of which Afro communities by themselves were seldom able to sustain. And the vital contribution of great white performers in making jazz thrive consisted of attracting other whites into the audience. . . .

RICHARD MERMIN
San Quentin Village
California

TO THE EDITOR:

It is ironic that in attempting to document reverse racism against white jazz musicians, Terry Teachout resorts to the same type of evidence . . . used by advocates of affirmative action, today's most menacing program of reverse racism.

Mr. Teachout begins his article by pointing out, correctly, that jazz, as an aesthetic medium, is not a racial phenomenon. However, he seems to conclude from this that all races should be equally or proportionately represented among jazz's ablest practitioners. So, when white composers appear to be given an "unfairly" small piece of the pie in Lincoln-Center-Jazz-Orchestra commissions or when their works are seldom performed, he sees this as evidence that, in the terminology of affirmative action and multiculturalism, a cabal of elite black jazz critics and musicians (who were overrated anyway) are purging the "canon" of the accomplishments of white musicians and suppressing current ones.

Like all such demagogic accounts, this one includes one sad real-world example, the talented white musician, Phil Woods, who cannot get a record contract. We are offered no evidence that his problems are connected with his race, but we are supposed to infer that, since he is white and underemployed, he must be the victim of discrimination. Mr. Teachout then asserts that Woods's case is typical. He comes off sounding like a white John Conyers, Jr., the Michigan Congressman who was unhappy with the ratio of black to white musicians in the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra.

Mr. Teachout forgets that racism is an attitude and a policy, and cannot be proved by one isolated example or by citing percentages. A disproportionately small number of employed white jazz musicians is no more evidence of discrimination than the fact that there are so few black university professors. It is impossible to impute the existence of racist actions, let alone thoughts, from outcomes; actual racism must be shown. But Mr. Teachout's attempt to do this, with a few vague quotations from Wynton Marsalis and Stanley Crouch, is not convincing.

It is quite possible that blacks as a group are more talented at jazz than whites are. This does not mean that great individual jazz musicians like Benny Goodman and Bill Evans do not rank with their most accomplished black fellows. But until a pattern of discrimination and racism is proved, we should stick with the more parsimonious explanation of unevenly distributed talent.

E.V. KONTOROVICH
Plainsboro, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

Terry Teachout's "The Color of Jazz" filled me with a great sense of sadness for the music I love with a passion, not unlike the pain caused by the death of a loved one.

Leading an all-white group for the past 25 years has certainly made me aware of the utter nonsense of the situation described in the article. Is Chico Freeman more important than Zoot Sims? Is Marcus Roberts better than Bill Evans? And on and on. Is this what jazz is all about? Who's better? My Daddy can beat up your Daddy? Oh, the shame!

Of course jazz is primarily of black origin, but the influences on it are diverse. I am reminded of this anecdote: Barney Kessel was berated by a black musician who claimed Barney had stolen his people's music. Barney said, "I'll tell you what. I'll give back *ching-ching-a-ding* if you return *do,re,mi,fa,sol, la,ti,do!*"

The folly of our bigoted society is well documented and the need for improvement is great. But in the past jazz has set an example for the rest of the world. I fell in love with jazz at the age of thirteen. I presume André Watts fell in love with classical music at some point. If whites can't play jazz, then logic dictates that blacks can't play classical music. I was part of a white quota system when I was hired for the 1956 Dizzy Gillespie band that toured the

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Middle East and South America under State Department sponsorship. But that is not why I worked with Dizzy on and off for over 30 years and became his close friend. And if I was good enough for him and Quincy Jones and Thelonious Monk, all of whom I worked with and considered good friends, why should I worry about what some young lion thinks of me? Because it hurts like hell. That's why. . . .

I can't get a performing grant for my group in my own town, from my local university (which thought enough of my efforts to award me an honorary doctorate), because I am white. That does not seem fair, and the policy is offensive. But the whole issue is divisive and further fuels enmity to the point of confrontation. And that is a very frightening thought.

Is it all Wynton Marsalis's and Stanley Crouch's fault? I don't think so. Surely the media, and especially record companies, have contributed to this abysmal state of affairs. Enough already! Let's play together and learn to love each other. It is our only salvation as a people. Let jazz represent this good side of our selves. Jazz speaks to the world and is a powerful force, but as it is, the music is already on the road to fossilization. Desist or perish!

The bad guys get all the press when good people don't speak out against this betrayal of America's gift to the world. I occupy that world and accept the gift as graciously as possible. I will not give it back.

PHIL WOODS
Delaware Water Gap
Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR:

Congratulations to COMMENTARY and Terry Teachout for shining light on one of the gloomiest of present-day social problems, reverse racism. . . .

The true tragedy of the present situation is that, against all the anti-black ugliness of the past 300 years, one glorious exception has been the world of jazz. No knowledgeable person denies that the African-American contribution to this beautiful art form has been dominant. The American white majority has always understood this. So far, so good. But for any black musician or layman to express contempt for the contributions of white jazz players is clearly morally unacceptable.

Although I played him in the movie, *The Benny Goodman Story*, I was never very fond of Benny personally, but it is simply a fact that to this day he is the best jazz clarinetist of them all.

Blacks still have enemies in white America. That being the case, it does not make a great deal of sense to be deliberately offensive to friendly whites who have never been guilty of racism.

Like many pale-faced observers, I have always been guilty of bias about blacks—in their favor. I once had fun with such bias by recording two jazz albums, *The Discovery of Buck Hammer* and *The Wild Piano of Maryanne Jackson*, both of which were attributed to obscure black pianists. Sure enough, the jazz critics—who were white—gave the albums much more respect than would have been the case if my own name had been on them.

STEVE ALLEN
Burbank, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Long-time laborers in the jazz vineyards are indebted to COMMENTARY for publishing Terry Teachout's superb and much-needed article, "The Color of Jazz."

The ugly specter of "Crow Jim" or reverse racism in the jazz world goes back at least to the 1960's, but has never loomed as large as it does today, with such high-profile spokesmen as Wynton Marsalis, Albert Murray, and Stanley Crouch. . . .

As Mr. Teachout makes clear, Crow Jim is hardly the exclusive property of blacks. A white student in my jazz-history class at Stanford handed in a term paper that claimed: "Black musicians went into jazz for the Art, and white musicians went into it for the money." And this is not an isolated case.

One need not have to be Jewish, like me, to abhor the rampant anti-Semitism that seems an inescapable part of the current vogue for Crow Jim among the black reverse-racists in jazz. . . .

GROVER SALES
Stanford University
Stanford, California

TO THE EDITOR:

In his article, Terry Teachout cites my book, *Cats of Any Color*. But here I would like to mention an incident that I did not describe in my book. . . . . At the Chicago Jazz Festival three or four years ago, a certain black writer on jazz, knowing of my Canadian background, asked me, "Why are there no blacks in the [Toronto-based] Rob McConnell band?" An undertext of his question was that, as a Canadian, I owed him an answer, and indeed there was an implication in his tone that somehow it was my fault. He clearly knew nothing about Canada . . . , where the black population is not large, and consequently there simply are not many black jazz musicians.

There were three big bands at the Chicago Jazz Festival that year. There was only one white musician among the three. This did not seem to bother my inquisitor at all, if indeed he even noticed.

Recently a writer praised my book in a review for *Jazziz*, but the magazine refused to print it: it was not "correct." That is how serious this polarization has become. It is ironic that the Lincoln Center program, which was established for the purported purpose of preserving jazz, is destroying it through a process of prejudice combined with cronyism and political opportunism. . . .

GENE LEES
Jazzletter
Ojai, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Terry Teachout's article is both timely and well-argued. The unhappy situation he identifies operates on several levels, and suggests a further point . . . It is possible that Murray, Crouch, Marsalis, and their acolytes are driven by a quite laudable intention: to raise consciousness and pride in a black generation whose basic aesthetic and cultural perceptions have been misshapen by ugli-

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ness and despair. If so, who would take issue with them? Each group has a right to role models and . . . a heritage of its own, and Armstrong, Ellington, *et al.* are towering figures, worthy candidates for enshrinement.

But by what means are such ends achieved? Armstrong, Ellington, and the rest won their preeminence in a field teeming with extraordinary musicians of both races. . . . As a jazz trumpeter and the author of a biography of Bix Beiderbecke (and a forthcoming book on white participation in jazz), I can state that for every Billie Holiday there was a Mildred Bailey, for every Roy Eldridge a Bunny Berigan, for every Coleman Hawkins a Bud Freeman. Many other whites made indispensable contributions: Red Norvo, master architect of jazz mallet playing; Frank Trumbauer, elegant model for Lester Young; Bix Beiderbecke, emissary of a lyric, Apollonian sensibility absent from jazz until his arrival. Their records, and those of countless others, provide easily available corroboration of their talent.

To deny them their well-earned place, rewriting them out of history as Crouch, Murray, and Marsalis have apparently undertaken to do, is to deprive jazz of one of its great strengths—its real (as opposed to rhetorical) multiculturalism. It is also dishonest; and falsification of history, whatever its perceived goals, is never justifiable. But as Mr. Teachout so eloquently reminds us, reverse racism has already invaded and gone far toward compromising the "meritocracy of comrades" that used to be jazz. And that is little short of tragic.

RICHARD M. SUDHALTER
Southold, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Terry Teachout seems to be quite accurate about racism in jazz. I arrived in New York in 1966 and was taken into the jazz circle where I was fortunate to spend a great deal of time with the players who were then at the pinnacle of their careers: Phil Woods, Thad Jones, Mel Lewis, Frank Wess, Joe Farrell, Jerome Richardson, Jerry Dodgion, Snooky Young, Chico O'Farrill, Joe Newman, Oliver Nelson, Quincy Jones . . . the list is too long to go on with here. But the musicians represented a complete cross-section of all that was going on in the jazz world in the 50's, 60's, and 70's. . . .

Though I was raised in the South before integration, I never experienced problems of racism in the company of any jazz musicians I had known, and coming to New York only confirmed this; in other words, every gig I went to was peopled by musicians from all ethnic backgrounds, and it seemed that no one was conscious of differences in the "cats" except for musical style, personality, and personal idiosyncrasies. . .

But things seem to have snuck up on us over the last ten or twelve years; now we find tremendous separation in the jazz community. I hesitate to point fingers, but would prefer to find ways to bring us back together. . . . Eventually, maybe those who feel as I do will get things back to normal. Jazz is a joyous music that anyone of any background who feels it and has the talent to express those feelings can play. . . .

MARVIN STAMM
Purdys, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

May I add a few footnotes to Terry Teachout's excellent article? Years ago Max Kaminsky (white cornetist) wrote that blacks did fashion a wholly new

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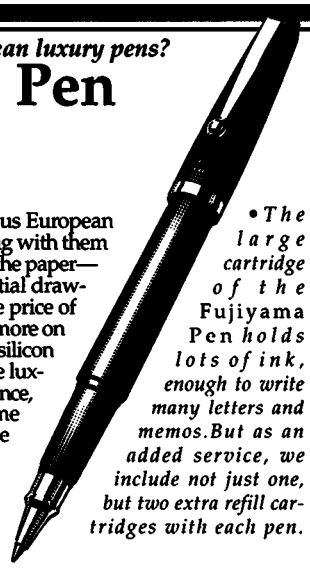

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music, but its roots were embedded in European music as well as the Negro. Without the American Negro there would be no jazz, and without the white man there would be no jazz. Jazz has never existed in Africa, and it doesn't exist there today. It was formed from the two musical cultures, from the African, which has the highest development of rhythm in the world, and from the European, which has the greatest development of harmony in the world, and it happened in America.

Coleman Hawkins (black saxophonist) wrote that in England he had trouble with people believing in the Crow-Jim concept of jazz. Hawkins declared that he had played

> with Benny Goodman and all of them and I didn't know any clarinet player that played any more than Benny. . . . And the famous old Dixieland Jazz Band wasn't colored and that was before *my* time!

. . . When Jimmy Harrison (black trombonist) and Jack Teagarden (white trombonist) met in New York, they were surprised and delighted that although separated by thousands of miles in their youth, they had come up with similar new ways to play the trombone.

ROBERT M. THORNTON
Fort Mitchell, Kentucky

TO THE EDITOR:

I applaud Terry Teachout's article. One of the cruelest effects of the situation he describes is that scores of worthy jazz artists over the age of thirty-five, black as well as white, are being denied opportunities and exposure that are rightfully theirs. As a result, vital artistic resources are in danger of being lost. The damage to jazz and our culture is unconscionable; if these current trends continue, the damage may also be irreparable.

BILL KIRCHNER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

I truly enjoyed Terry Teachout's article. Jazz came from two sources; the blues and the popular music of the day. The importance of the blues in jazz has never been questioned. . . . The playing of popular music by jazz musicians also has a history that dates back to the origin of jazz.

The earliest jazz bands played an upscale version of the music that was then being played by New Orleans marching bands. Often the same musicians played brass-band music in street bands as well as jazz in the clubs and brothels. This marching-band music was not the blues, it was European music that black musicians in New Orleans quickly made their own. For the next 80 years, jazz musicians everywhere played tunes from the treasury of American popular song.

In the 1970's there was fusion when, once again, jazz presented an instrumental and refined version of the rock music of this period. In the 1980's and 1990's musicians like Miles Davis did the same thing with hip-hop. For almost a century the blues and pop coexisted peacefully within jazz where they influenced and nourished each other.

Still, there is a grain of truth to the argument of the jazz racialists. White musicians, although they played the blues, were on the whole more comfortable with the other (pop) side of the jazz equation. Black musicians, however, were equally at home in both traditions. But the racialists' attempt to remove the non-blues element from jazz is a distortion of the facts. . . . The only reason for doing this is to superimpose a political bias on music that has always (if imperfectly) tried to recognize quality above skin color.

MICHAEL I. SIMS
Vancouver
British Columbia, Canada

TERRY TEACHOUT writes:

I am saddened that Loren Schoenberg, a jazz musician whom I greatly admire, has chosen to defend the racialist rhetoric of Albert Murray and Stanley Crouch, and to misrepresent the central argument of Murray's *Stomping the Blues*, which is accurately summarized in "The Color of Jazz." I also noted there that Crouch "has on occasion expressed admiration for certain white players," which hardly relieves him of responsibility for the other, more prominent occasions when he has written about the white contribution to jazz in terms whose racialist implications are blatantly self-evident. (It has always been part of Crouch's method to work both sides of the street.)

To the best of my knowledge, Linda Chavez and Gerald A. Reynolds do not have backgrounds in jazz. Presumably this explains the various forms of confusion evident in their letter, just as it explains much about the "aesthetic" theories of Murray and Crouch. To recapitulate: (1) Murray's contention is not that "jazz musicians who fail to incorporate blues and swing into their music are playing a diluted form of jazz." It is that jazz and the blues are consubstantial; that white musicians cannot play the blues; and that white musicians therefore cannot be "authentic" jazz players. Every term of this syllogism is demonstrably untrue, and the conclusion racialist on its face. (2) My article was not about neoclassicism in jazz, a movement which existed before Wynton Marsalis was born and of which I am, in fact, a vocal and enthusiastic supporter: it was about the effects Albert Murray's racialist ideas have had on the culture of jazz in America, with particular reference to Jazz at Lincoln Center. (3) My argument does not rest solely, or even primarily, on hiring figures: rather, it rests on the musical content of the programs devised and presented by Marsalis and Crouch.

A historically oriented jazz concert series which does not acknowledge in its programming the achievements of great white jazz musicians of the past is, once again, racialist on its face. This would be true even if every member of the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, including Marsalis, were white. The point is not that Jazz at Lincoln Center discriminates in hiring—it is that

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Jazz at Lincoln Center uses public monies to disseminate and legitimize a racialist theory of jazz. As for what does and does not "make much headway in the jazz community," I venture to suggest that the jazz musicians whose letters appear above know more about the views of the jazz community than Miss Chavez and Mr. Reynolds.

Ted Panken is also more knowledgeable about jazz than Miss Chavez and Mr. Reynolds, but the categorical assertions he makes in his letter should not be taken at face value by uninformed readers. For example, racially integrated jazz combos were common from the 40's on (Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, Oscar Peterson, Gerry Mulligan, and Dave Brubeck were only a few of the many jazz stars who led integrated bands in the postwar period), and racially integrated recording sessions were common from the 30's on (of the 31 small-group sessions Teddy Wilson recorded under his own name between 1935 and the beginning of 1939, at least twenty were integrated).

As for the specific points Mr. Panken makes about Jazz at Lincoln Center, I am at a loss to know what he means when he says that my statement that white composers are not commissioned to write for the full Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra (as opposed to smaller groups performing under the banner of Jazz at Lincoln Center) has "some" validity. Either it is true or not. Similarly, what is "absurd" about my saying that Jazz at Lincoln Center has "systematically ignored" the work of older white players, composers, and arrangers? Again, this is a matter of fact, not opinion. And while I, too, would like jazz audiences to be "well-informed" about the history of jazz, I fail to see how the promulgation by famous musicians, widely admired critics, and state-subsidized agencies of racialist theories of jazz will bring us any closer to that noble goal.

Indeed, I think it far more likely that such activities will encourage the spread of the sentiments found in Richard Mermin's letter, which is fully as racialist as anything Murray or Crouch have written about jazz (and racialist toward whites and blacks alike, which is no small trick). It requires no comment from me save to say it is simply not true that Lester Young was the only "Afro" jazz musician who "claimed that he had been influenced by a white player"—though judging from his tone, I doubt it would matter overmuch to Mr. Mermin were his ignorance to be compromised by the facts.

E.V. Kontorovich is equally ignorant of the facts, and with less excuse, since reading my essay more carefully would have solved his problem. His "more parsimonious explanation of unevenly distributed talent" bears no relationship to the musical environment described in "The Color of Jazz," in which talent is and has always been distributed without regard to race. Therein lies the problem with the Smithsonian and Lincoln Center jazz programs, where "pieces of the pie" are apportioned according to race, not talent—*de jure* in the case of the Smithsonian, *de facto* (so far as is known) in the case of Lincoln Center.

I thank the other correspondents—plus the many musicians, some of them very distinguished indeed, who privately expressed approval of "The Color of Jazz"—for their generous comments. Phil Woods and Gene Lees were, of course, mentioned in my original article; Steve Allen is known for his lifelong advocacy of jazz, going back to his days as host of the *Tonight Show*; Grover Sales is a well-known jazz educator and commentator; Richard M. Sudhalter's *Bix: Man and Legend* is the finest biography of a jazz musician yet written; Marvin Stamm is a trumpeter of the highest distinction whose long résumé includes stints with the Stan Kenton, Woody Herman, and Thad Jones/Mel Lewis orchestras; Bill Kirchner is a jazz saxophonist, composer, and scholar of note. I list their credentials to give readers of COMMENTARY a sense of perspective about the response of the jazz community to the article.

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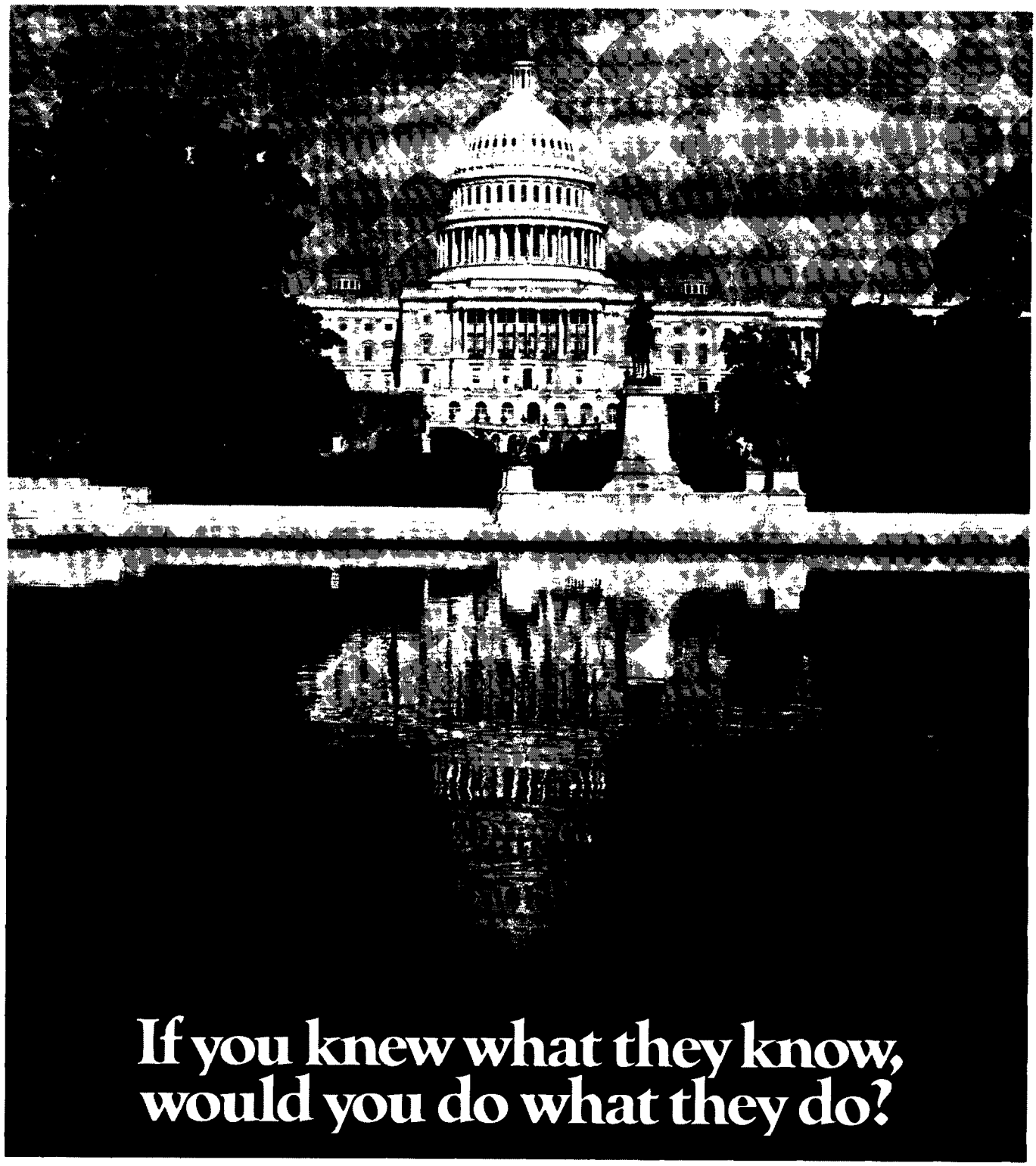

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Commentary
January 1996

Israel & the Assassination: A Reckoning

Hillel Halkin

As a voter for the Labor party and Yitzhak Rabin in the 1992 elections and a politically angry man for the past two years, I found myself growing angrier and angrier the week after his assassination on November 4. The angrier I grew, the more I argued with everyone around me, and the more I argued, the angrier it made me. Not, like everyone else, at the assassin and those said to have incited him, but at the Labor party, and at the Israeli Left, and even at the murdered man himself, who was certainly not responsible for the thick sludge of sentimentality, so far from his own personal style (though not from that of his speechwriters), in which he was being quickly shrouded. I must have seemed a very unpleasant person. I may seem one to you now.

A large part of the sentimentalization in the days after the Rabin assassination lay in the event's being treated as, above all, a violation of the Sixth Commandment. "How could such a murderer have come from our midst?" and "What Jew would kill a Jew over land?" were the two questions most often asked in Israel, while, when Ted Koppel brought his *Nightline* to Jerusalem the week after the assassination, he billed the special broadcast as "Thou Shalt Not Kill."

This is sentimental because, though murder is a frightful crime, large numbers of men and women whose right to live is as great as that of the Prime Minister of Israel are the barely noticed victims of murder every day. In Israel alone, the police blotters show that dozens of Jews are killed annually by Jews without *Nightline*'s paying attention. And what, if not land, has been the single greatest motive for killing in human history? What, if not the struggle for land, has caused tens of thousands of Jews and Arabs to be killed in the Middle East?

Was it not a struggle for land that made Yitzhak Rabin join the Palmah, the elite fighting force of Jewish Palestine, as a young man, and thus begin the military career that led to his becoming Prime Minister of Israel? Was it not for the control of land that, as Prime Minister, he continued a military presence in Lebanon which in 1995 alone resulted in the deaths of over twenty Israeli soldiers? If land is never a legitimate reason for killing, every soldier who fights for the defense of his country is a murderer.

What made Yitzhak Rabin's assassination exceptionally atrocious was not its being a murder but its being a cataclysmic political blunder.

It was so, firstly, because—as Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu put it—democratically chosen governments are changed by elections, not by assassinations. Break that rule once and democracy is imperiled—and an undemocratic Israel cannot prosper, no matter how much or how little land it commands.

And it was so, secondly, because what it most

Hillel Halkin, *whose recent articles in* Commentary *include "Israel Against Itself" (November 1994), is an essayist and critic who reports from Israel for the* Forward.

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damaged was the public standing of the critics of the Oslo peace process, to whose extreme wing Yigal Amir belonged. Had Amir wished to deliver a crushing blow to these critics, he could not have found a better way. That is why a friend of mine in America, a far more unequivocal opponent of the peace process than I, faxed me the week of the killing: "I would gladly see the bastard hang who prevented the people of Israel from voting against Rabin."

EQUALLY SENTIMENTAL was the instant mythologization of Yitzhak Rabin as a knight of peace in shining armor.

The day after the assassination I talked with a different friend, an Israeli Arab. "I'm sorry it happened," he said, "but you can't expect me to feel sad for Rabin."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because," he said, "I happened to be in Tulkarm [a city on the West Bank] one day at the beginning of the *intifada*, when Rabin, who was then Minister of Defense, gave his famous order to the army to 'break the arms and legs' of Palestinians. And what I saw in Tulkarm were broken arms and legs. Children's too. That order was not meant metaphorically."

Indeed it was not, as many Israelis who carried it out can testify.

It has been said that Yitzhak Rabin had a change of heart and came out of the *intifada* a different man, convinced of the need for a reconciliation with the Palestinians. That may be. But in the summer of 1993, after his conversion supposedly took place and Israeli and PLO negotiators were meeting secretly in Oslo, Rabin, now Prime Minister, launched Operation Accountability, a massive retaliatory artillery bombardment that caused great civilian destruction in dozens of Lebanese villages accused of harboring Hezbollah guerrillas. He was then what he had always been and remained until his death, several days before which he almost certainly ordered the murder of Islamic Jihad leader Fat'hi Shiqaqi in Malta—namely, a highly pragmatic soldier and politician who had no special liking for violence but no compunctions about using it when it served tactical or strategic ends.

I VOTED for Yitzhak Rabin in 1992 because, like many Israelis, I felt that the situation in the West Bank and Gaza had reached an intolerable point and that the Likud government was incapable of changing it. In terms of change, I was prepared to go farther than most Rabin voters. In an article published in this magazine over twenty years ago* I had advocated, subject to certain conditions, the establishment of a Palestinian state along Israel's 1967 borders, and in 1992 I still held to this opinion. I still hold to it today.

Why, then, did I react with such anger to the Israeli-PLO agreement when it was announced in September 1993? Because it was obvious to me immediately that the Labor party had lied to the Israeli public; that it was either continuing to lie to it, or lying to itself, or both; and that all these lies were highly dangerous.

In its official 1992 campaign platform Labor had declared:

> Israel will continue and complete negotiations with authorized and agreed-on Palestinians *from the territories occupied by Israel since 1967* [emphasis added]. . . . There is a need for an agreement in a Jordanian-Palestinian framework . . . and not a separate Palestinian state west of the Jordan. . . . Jerusalem will remain united and undivided under Israeli sovereignty. . . . The Jordan Valley and the western shore of the Dead Sea will be under Israeli sovereignty. . . . In any peace agreement with Syria, Israel's presence and control, both military and in terms of settlements, will continue [on the Golan Heights].

Let us set aside the question of the Golan Heights, even though Yitzhak Rabin's violation of his campaign promises in the course of his negotiations with President Hafez Assad was only partially compensated for by his announced commitment to holding a national referendum before signing a peace treaty with Syria. Let us speak instead of Oslo and the Palestinians.

The Labor party lied to the Israeli public because its 1992 platform clearly ruled out negotiations, let alone a comprehensive political settlement, between Israel and the PLO, which in 1992 was based not in the territories but in Tunis and which had been considered by all previous Israeli governments a terrorist organization not to be treated with. And since the PLO had stated repeatedly before Oslo, and continued to state after it, that its immediate goal was the creation of an independent Palestinian state in Gaza and the entire West Bank with East Jerusalem as its capital, there were only two explanations of Israeli thinking at Oslo. One was that Yitzhak Rabin and his government had secretly decided to acquiesce in the establishment of such a state, thereby reneging on

*"Driving Toward Jerusalem," January 1975.

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the rest of their campaign pledges regarding the future of the occupied territories. The other was that they believed the peace process could be brought to a successful conclusion without yielding to the PLO's main territorial and political demands.

Let us first consider the second of these possibilities. In its final-stage negotiations with the Palestinians, set to begin next May, can Israel simply declare: "Gentlemen, you are not getting a state and you are not getting Jerusalem and other areas, and you can either take or leave what we are giving you"?

In theory, of course, it can. In practice, the Palestinians, under the terms of the Oslo agreement, will by then have nearly 30,000 armed policemen in the West Bank and Gaza, close to the number of combat soldiers in Israel's standing army. Will Israel be prepared to risk engaging this force in armed conflict if a political impasse is reached?

This question, when put to supporters of the peace process, is met by a snort. It is absurd to think, one is told, that 30,000 policemen with rifles could offer serious resistance to a well-trained army with tanks and aircraft.

It is the snorters, however, who are being disingenuous if they imagine three divisions of Palestinian policemen will march on Jerusalem while the Israeli air force pounds them from above. These policemen can be divided into thousands of small cells of guerrilla fighters comprising five or ten members each. At the peak of the *intifada* there were probably never more than ten or twenty armed units of this size operating at any given moment in the occupied territories. Dozens of Israelis were killed by them. It took months to hunt down some of these bands; tanks and aircraft had little to do with the matter.

Would Yitzhak Rabin—who, we are told, was psychologically shaken to the core by the *intifada*—have been ready to expose Israel to a prolonged period of armed violence, possibly hundreds of times greater than that of the *intifada*, in order to keep his campaign promises regarding Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley, when he had already violated other key pledges in the same paragraph? Will his successor, Shimon Peres, be ready to do so if it should prove necessary?

BUT, WE are told, it will not prove necessary—because already at Oslo the Rabin government knew it was agreeing to the establishment of a Palestinian state in Gaza and the entire West Bank ruled from Jerusalem, and all its protestations to the contrary, at the time and subsequently, were not to be taken seriously.

"Honestly," said an Israeli to me during the week after the assassination, "you are being hopelessly naive. You yourself say that, 'subject to certain conditions,' you believe a Palestinian state is the solution. Do you really think that Labor could have been elected in 1992 had it openly said as much to a public that had been brainwashed against such an idea for years? And with whom could one negotiate such a solution except the PLO, an organization that Israeli voters feared and abhorred? No serious person expects politicians always to tell the truth. It is a leader's duty to get elected and lead, not to get permission for every step he takes."

Despite my own reputation among my friends as a cynic, such a view, which is almost universally held today on the Israeli Left, strikes me as cynical beyond bounds. Of course politicians frequently lie to the public, although those who lie least and with the uneasiest conscience are the ones who look best in the history books. But it is one thing to lie about ordinary matters of political expediency, another to lie about a momentous decision that will profoundly affect the future of one's country for as long as it continues to exist. If the question of Israel's borders; of their location and defensibility; of who lives and rules on either side of them; and of their relationship to the claims of thousands of years of Jewish history is not something about which to consult the Israeli public within the framework of democratic politics, what is democracy for?

Nor is it the case that Labor had to fool the voters in order to carry out its present policies. There were other alternatives. Having won the elections on the platform it ran on, Labor could have begun to prepare public opinion for the new direction it wished to take. It could have asked the PLO to help change the climate in Israel by declaring a moratorium on terror, or by repealing the provisions of the Palestinian Charter which call for Israel's destruction, or some other dramatic act. It could have begun tentative, noncommittal talks with the PLO and then revealed their content to the public. And having done any or all of these things, it could then have said:

> Citizens of Israel: now that you have seen how the PLO has changed and is ready to recognize the state of Israel and live peacefully alongside it, we are calling new elections in order to ask you for a mandate to commence negotiations with it that may lead to a Palestinian state.

Would that mandate have been given? It is im-

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possible to say. But whether or not, the people would have spoken. And perhaps if the people had been allowed to speak, Yitzhak Rabin would be alive today.

OR PERHAPS not? His murderer was a true believer in the Land of Israel, not in democratic procedures. Still, as has been frequently pointed out in the wake of the assassination, true believers tend to reach for their guns when they feel the rage of a wider public behind them—and the rage of many Israelis against Yitzhak Rabin dated to the day when, without asking or warning them, he signed an agreement with Yasir Arafat, a man regarded by them with revulsion, and shook hands with him on the White House lawn. Although those who in the next two years accused Rabin of betraying his country were speaking overheatedly, he did betray many of the voters whose ballots helped elect him Prime Minister by a narrow margin.

Rabin's turnabout has been compared by his defenders to that of Likud's Menachem Begin, who was elected in 1977 on a platform that never hinted he would return all of Sinai to Egypt. But there is a huge difference. When Begin submitted the accord with Egypt to the Knesset, it won overwhelming bipartisan approval, with an even higher percentage of Labor members than Likud members voting for it; had he called for new elections, he would have won them handily. By contrast, the Rabin-Arafat rapprochement split Israel in half, both in the Knesset and in the opinion polls. The Knesset's bitterly debated ratification of Stage 2 of the Oslo agreement, a month before the assassination, passed by a vote of 61 to 59. Minus the five votes of two anti-Zionist Arab parties that object to the definition of Israel as a Jewish state, the results were 59 to 56 against.

Granted, a parliamentary majority of two is as binding as one of 200. The question in Israel was never the Rabin government's formal legitimacy; it was its political and moral wisdom in pursuing a course that turned Israel ferociously against itself on a matter of the utmost historical gravity. But as Rabin followed this course, and was applauded by the same Left that in 1982 had denounced Begin's invasion of Lebanon for violating the principle that no Israeli government should go to war without a national consensus, he and his supporters scoffed at the proposition that a radically conceived peace demanded a measure of national unity, too.

Moreover, it was clear to many thinking Israelis that, even if the Rabin government had received the nation's backing to sign the accord reached at Oslo; and even if this accord led in a few years' time to a "final" peace settlement with the Palestinians, there was no certainty that its finality would be final. A Palestinian state, even one based on a complete Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 lines, would comprise only 23 percent of the area of British Mandate Palestine. It is no secret that many and probably most Palestinians, including the leaders of the PLO, hoped such a state would be the first stage in reclaiming more Palestinian land, possibly up to the 1947 partition borders and beyond.

Indeed, while it seemed obviously in Israel's interest that any Palestinian state be an economic and political success, the more successful this state was, the more Israel's own Arab citizens, of whom there are at present nearly a million largely concentrated in the Galilee, would be encouraged to want to join it. Given the current mood of disaffection toward Israeli society felt by most Israeli Arabs, whose sense of Palestinian identity has been greatly strengthened by the installation of the PLO next-door to them, a movement for *Anschluss* with the state of Palestine would be likely to develop among them in the future, plunging Israel back into a period of bitter internal Arab-Jewish strife that would probably draw into it not only an irredentist Palestine but still other Arab countries. The better the peace process went in the short run, therefore, the riskier it might turn out in the end.

Thus it was that, from the autumn of 1993 to the autumn of 1995, as the Oslo agreement was implemented and thousands of armed Palestinian policemen arrived in Gaza and Jericho and began moving into the West Bank; and as some 150 Israelis died in Palestinian terror attacks which the PLO, while procrastinating about the Palestinian Charter, was not particularly vigilant in preventing; and as the Rabin government continued to keep secret from its own people what its aims were in the peace process, including the borders it planned to insist on and its conception of the fate of the tens of thousands of Jewish settlers living beyond them, much of Israel felt like passengers on a ship that had been hijacked by its own captain and crew, who were now piloting it through a dense fog and mined waters, with the consent of half of those aboard, toward an unrevealed and perhaps calamitous destination.

The emotions aroused by this were fear, helplessness, bitterness, frustration, and, as I have said,

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rage. All of them were channeled into the anti-government invective that mounted in volume and vituperation throughout this period and that was, so the Israeli Left now tells us, the finger that pressed the trigger that was Yigal Amir.

I WOULD NOT dispute this. Although Amir was apparently unaided on the night of the shooting, he was what is known in Hebrew as a *sh'liah avera*, a messenger of sin, for a large body of Israelis who would not have dreamed of doing what he did. This public, heavily represented in what is known as the "national-religious camp" and in the settlements of Judea and Samaria that are the most threatened by the Oslo pact, owes itself and the nation a reckoning for having allowed elements in its midst to be swept away by inflammatory rhetoric and bizarre rabbinical rulings that could have encouraged a Yigal Amir to think he was acting on its behalf.

Such a reckoning, at least part of the Israeli Right is now making. The reckoning that is not being made, and of the need for which there seems to be no awareness among those who should make it, concerns the rhetoric and deeds of the Left, hardly any less inflammatory during the period in question.

Before me is the pro-government newspaper *Ha'aretz*, Israel's most respected daily, from March 26, 1995. Its front-page headline: "Rabin: Likud Is Collaborator With Hamas." The text of the lead article reports that "Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin sharply attacked Likud yesterday [saying], 'The terror organizations are succeeding because Likud has become a collaborator with Islamic Jihad and Hamas.'" It goes on:

> In inner consultations recently held at high levels of the Labor party, it was decided to step up attacks against the Right, especially against Likud and its leader. There is concern in Labor over polls, taken in the last several months, showing Netanyahu with a large lead over Rabin. . . . Ranking members of Labor welcomed this changed line. One cabinet minister said he was happy that "The Prime Minister has decided to take off the gloves with Likud." A second minister, on the other hand, expressed concern that extreme language might cause the political arena to degenerate into verbal violence a year before the elections. . . .

It would be interesting to know who the prescient second minister was. And it would be interesting to ask the first minister whether, if a left-wing assassin had killed Benjamin Netanyahu, he would now be saying that Yitzhak Rabin had "blood on his hands," as Labor has been saying of Netanyahu.

As it happens, Netanyahu and Likud have been specifically charged by the Left not so much with direct incitement as with failing to disown incendiary language and symbolism coming from extra-parliamentary right-wing groups—the prime example, repeatedly cited since the assassination, being the blind eye turned by them to a poster of Rabin in an SS uniform displayed by demonstrators at a Likud rally in October. This poster, it now appears, was commissioned and disseminated by Avishai Raviv, a right-wing extremist who was, however, acting as an agent for the Israeli General Security Service: i.e., the Rabin government itself.

This does not exonerate the failure of the Right to react more strongly—but it is worth recalling that throughout the 1980's, long before it was employed by the right wing as a term of abuse, the word "Nazi" was often used by the far Left to describe the settlers and the Likud government that backed them. Perhaps the most egregious case was that of the late Yeshayahu Leibowitz, a well-known theologian and political polemicist, who invented the term "Judeo-Nazi" and who in 1993 was awarded the prestigious Israel Prize for intellectual achievement by Yitzhak Rabin's Minister of Culture, Shulamit Aloni. There was nothing wrong in calling Jews Nazis, it would seem, as long they were the right Jews.

Indeed, there was nothing wrong with calling the settlers many other names, too, which were routinely hurled at them by the Left in a systematic attempt to delegitimize them after they began organizing against the Oslo agreement: "enemies of peace," "religious fanatics," "dancers on the blood [of terror victims]," "Arab-haters," and "Hamasniks" were some of the more common epithets. It made no difference that these same settlers, who for years had braved the daily dangers of the *intifada*, had been, in the name of the national security of Israel, assisted and encouraged to take up residence in their homes by previous Israeli governments, including the earlier 1974-77 regime of Yitzhak Rabin. Asked about one of their demonstrations, the same Rabin declared that, for his part, "They can spin around like propellers for as long as they like."

Another example of right-wing incitement said to have provoked the assassination were the placards and shouts of "Rabin Is a Murderer" at many anti-government demonstrations, especially after

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Palestinian terror attacks. These were reprehensible—but the copyright on them, too, belonged to the Left. Such slogans first surfaced in Israel in 1982, at the huge Labor-party and Peace Now rally held in Tel Aviv's Kings of Israel Square (now Yitzhak Rabin Square) to protest the massacre of Palestinians by Lebanese Christians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. There, signs proclaiming "Begin Is a Murderer" and "Sharon Is a Murderer" were held high by many demonstrators. I can vouch that no one asked for their removal because I was there holding a sign myself (although differently worded, as I recall).

But, protests the Left, there is no comparison: although we too may have sinned with words, nearly all the threats and incidents of political violence that Israel has witnessed in recent years have come from the Right. This is true. Right-wing extremism in Israel *has* been more violent; one reason for this is that, ideologically, the far Right tends to view conflict, rather than the resolution of it, as an inescapable existential imperative of Israeli Jews. And yet the Machiavellian use, by a secret service controlled by the Rabin government, of *agents provocateurs* like Raviv to foment and aggravate such violence as a means of discrediting the opposition to the peace process is no less frightening than the violence itself. Political thuggery is a grave threat to a democracy; employing a secret service to manipulate a country's political life in favor of its ruling party, let alone by paying hoodlums to threaten and assault people and destroy property, is far graver, reminiscent of some of the most unsavory regimes of our century.

In the end, perhaps, it is pointless to try to keep score in such a game of tit-before-tat. Indeed, although both the Right and the Left contributed generously to the acrimonious atmosphere that was created in the period after Oslo, it is on the whole remarkable, given the passions aroused by one of the most agonizingly fateful moments the Jewish people has ever lived through, that democratic forms have been so well observed in Israel up to the assassination. (Since the assassination there have been signs that the Labor government has embarked on a worrisome policy of using rarely invoked anti-"incitement-to-rebellion" laws in order to intimidate forms of protest and criticism that would be permitted, or at least considered less severe legal offenses, in most democratic countries.) In terms of the tone of the political debate, Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards in France, pro- and anti-Vietnam-war demonstrators in the United States, were no more polite when arguing about much less. They, after all, were fighting only for the soul of their country; here the struggle is over the limbs of the body as well.

ONE CAN point to the exact historical moment when the center dropped out of Israeli politics, leaving an overwhelmingly secular Left and a heavily religious Right facing each other across a discourseless chasm. But although this happened politically in September 1993 with the signing of the Oslo agreement, culturally it was a long while in the making.

In a deep sense, the processes leading up to this moment reflect the failure of the grand cultural project of Zionism, whose root assumption, once shared by secular and religious Zionists alike, was that it was possible to build a society that would combine a commitment to the modern world and its highest ideals with an allegiance, if not to the ritual forms, at least to the great texts and memories of Jewish tradition and their resonance in the physical landscape of Israel.

For most of this century, as reflected in literature, arts, popular culture, and politics, this project had every appearance of success. As late as the 1960's, the same Bible which, shortly before his death, Yitzhak Rabin referred to as "an antiquated land registry" was still a living book in secular Israel. Here is Moshe Dayan, a product of the Labor movement and only seven years older than Rabin, speaking a month after the Six-Day War of 1967 placed in Jewish hands the portion of central Palestine that had been lost to Jordan in the unavoidable partition of 1948:

> We have returned to the mountainland, to the cradle of our people and the legacy of our fathers, to the land of the Judges and to the bastion of the kingdom of the House of David. We have returned to Hebron, to Shechem [Nablus], to Bethlehem, to Anatot, to Jericho, and to the fords of the Jordan.

Today, when such language in the mouth of a Labor-party politician would sound hopelessly archaic, it is possible to see that Dayan's generation derived its own romantic attachment to the Bible and Jewish history less (as Zionist myth had it) from the vaunted contact of the native-born *sabra* with the soil of the land of Israel than from its East-European-born parents, themselves the products of religious homes; and that the apparent link binding Hebrew secularism to Jewish tradition was perhaps less a viable carrying forward of tradition

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than tradition's last gasp. What has happened with the final expiration of that gasp is well illustrated by the case of Dayan's daughter Ya'el, a left-wing Labor politician whose only known public reference to the Bible, made in defense of gay rights, has been to assert that David and Jonathan were homosexual lovers, and who has declared that she will be happy to visit Hebron on a Palestinian visa.

It was the Palestinians in the occupied territories, certainly, who hastened a polarization in Israeli life that would have taken place far more slowly and less painfully without them. For as the Israeli occupation of the territories lengthened, and the Jewish settlement movement grew, and with it the increasingly organized and violent resistance of the local Palestinian population, culminating in the *intifada*, the choice became a seemingly stark one. Either Israel relinquished its title to Judea and Samaria, the geographical core of the historical Jewish homeland, and so, by freeing the people living there from its yoke, took its stand (said the Left) with enlightened humanity; or else it pressed its claim to the areas and kept faith (said the Right) with Jewish memory.

This was a cruel dilemma. And it represented a great irony, for it meant that the Jewish state, which according to Zionism had come to heal the inner split between the human being in the Jew and the Jew in the human being, had now driven a new and terrible wedge into the breach.

Like a man in great torment who breaks psychologically in two, Israel thus went, or was dragged, to Oslo as two nations, each willing to risk what the other was not and unwilling to risk what the other was; neither able to communicate with or to understand the other but only to blame the other rancorously; thesis and antithesis, each half of the now-fractured personality of the Jewish people in its homeland.

I am not a believer in the view that tormented nations need psychiatrists rather than politicians. Only a wise politics can help to join again what a foolish politics has helped to sunder. But can one, in today's circumstances, imagine a politics wise enough?

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For a New Concert of Europe

Mark Helprin

THOUGH THE litany of wars is at present neither longer nor more ferocious than usual, for the first time in half a century they are not confined to the periphery but have taken root in Europe. Almost half a dozen, some momentarily quiescent, others not, they stretch from the Caspian to the Adriatic, all on approximately the same band of latitude, all as a result of the Soviet collapse. It is as if, in a planetary system, the black sun were suddenly removed.

But Russia always hides somewhere deep within itself the capacity to rise from the dead. As in the case of post-Versailles Germany, its pride has been injured and its resentments are building. Unlike post-Versailles Germany it enjoys a fully operable nuclear arsenal and the right to arm openly. If Germany went from Versailles to blitzkrieg in less than twenty years, the United States from Vietnam to the Gulf war in fifteen, if the course of the Great Depression was only ten, if Europe could descend into the greatest war of its history in 1939 and emerge rich and strong less than two decades later, if the paper buildings of Japan were ash in 1945... how can we assume that Russia, where the clock has been ticking almost ten years in dissolution, will not resurrect itself within the space of a few American electoral cycles?

After the cold war the binding institutions of the West, with no spur to unity, are slowly fading away as other factors strengthen reciprocally. A persistent fascist electoral splinter in Europe oscillates between 5 and 10 percent, sometimes surging higher. Large remnants of the hard Left remain, and specialized parties have emerged to cater to those with disillusionments that change day by day. Faltering unification seems to indicate, at least in relative terms, the rise of underlying frictions. All that is needed to bring these elements to life is the pressure of a deeply distressed economy or a nearby war that divides habitual allies along habitual faults.

Mind you, this is the normal state of things. Dangerous, yes, but neither unusual nor unmanageable unless approached in the thrall of fashionable ideas. In the national-security debate today we have virtually no responsible assessment of the order of battle. The United States is now in the process of guaranteeing in Bosnia a peace agreement of extraordinary fragility. Given that, and that the Russians are inclined to back the Serbs, and the Germans the Croats (and that therein lies a pattern of disaster that cannot be thoughtlessly dismissed), who takes into account actual Russian force-projection capacity? Given that the United States has offered vague and mysterious guarantees to Ukraine, and appears to be committed to the ex-

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pansion of NATO despite grave Russian objections, who debates with reliable precision the new military reality in Europe after the death of the Warsaw Pact and the senescence of NATO?*

THE ANSWER is, virtually no one. The Clinton administration is no more interested in such things than Caspar Weinberger was interested in bringing feminism to Indonesia. Despite Jimmy Carter's apparently infectious influence on the President, and the almost hysterical promotion of "peace" on several continents simultaneously, the administration is concerned with the election and the economy, and understands perfectly that it cannot mount an offensive of good works and holiday turkeys if its walking-around money goes to building airlift capacity and keeping up armored divisions.

Of course, as we approach the next presidential election I would not presume to label as sins my own party's increasingly rare imperfections. Unlike liberals, who share the strange conviction that the real test of strength is surrender, Republicans (though hesitant vis-à-vis Bosnia) often cannot take yes for an answer. Like General Patton, who was uncomfortable with what he considered the temporary end of World War II, some Republicans and conservatives are eager to take advantage of Russia's weakened condition and extend American sway to the "near abroad." In this they share common ground with President Clinton, the guarantor of Ukraine, except that, whereas he, being tentative, would buckle at the first sign of a fur hat, they would be brave and buckle later.

They would have little choice. The Russian military is deployed not only throughout Russia, which in its great expanse borders on most of the former Soviet republics, but also as an expeditionary force (in numbers that match those of all the American troops left in Europe) on the Baltic in the isle-like Kaliningrad oblast, in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine.† The United States has no more latitude in these remote places than does Russia in Puerto Rico, and yet some fervently want to wander in this wilderness.

Americans are once more engaged in weighing isolationism versus interventionism, a controversy settled again and again by the action and reality of the international system. So many times has history shown the idea of Fortress America to be untenable that it is now mainly the province of the tub thumpers. The more refined debate starts from the necessity to wield power abroad, but turns on the definition of when and where intervention is justifiable. Of course this is nothing new, but it is now particularly confused. Like a retinal grenade, the flash from the destruction of the blocs has blinded many people to what is important, and it is not possible to define what is marginal if you cannot designate the center.

THE CENTER is Europe, which is not to say that everyone agrees.** My views may betray my historical outlook, but it is a fact that Europe has been the cradle of the two world wars. It is the most interconnected region of the world, richer in "transactions" than any other. Western Europe alone manages six times the combined imports and exports of Japan, and a third again as much GDP as all of East Asia, which covers so much more of the globe and has produced so many economic miracles. As the hinge of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, it is of strategically inimitable importance. It is crowded, intricately divided, and the seat of great and conflicting historical movements with adherents in all parts of the world. It is immensely wealthy; it fronts on two oceans and encompasses many seas; it is tied by bonds of history, language, alliance, and trade to the second most prosperous region in the world, North America, more firmly than any other major group of nations is tied to any other. The birthplace of democracy and technology, and the home of three of the five major nuclear powers, it is intensely saturated with armaments and steeped in forceful military traditions that, once lit, burn more brightly than phosphorus.

Both the administration and, to a lesser extent, the opposition respond to these problems with accidental structures, with gardens planted not in rows but at random. Underlying all other errors is the belief that the deportment of nations in a state system no longer conforms to the fundamental

* For example, who in a position of power reflects on the revision of Russian military doctrine to allow the more promiscuous pre-Gorbachev view of limited nuclear warfare? See Mary C. FitzGerald, "Russia's New Military Doctrine," *Hudson Briefing Paper Number 148.*

† *The Military Balance, 1995/96*, International Institute for Strategic Studies (London, 1995).

** True, Asia is of great importance, but China already dominates the East Asian land mass and cannot overwhelm the highly developed islands and "virtual islands" on the edge unless it adopts a maritime strategy requiring, at a minimum, the prior solution of its problems of infrastructure and per-capita GNP. In World War II, the Pacific theater was always subsidiary to the European, and for good reasons, including the vastness of the Pacific and the natural self-containment of East Asia, a fact not only of geography but of inclination worn deeply into the patterns of history.

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rules that have described it throughout history. To this are added the brazen subjugation of foreign affairs to domestic policy and politics, and the perception and conduct of foreign relations according to the precepts of moralism, environmentalism, feminism, mercantilism, jingoism, pacifism, and God knows what else.

In looking at the problems of the day the practitioners of these extraneous doctrines may be required to believe, for example, that economic strength is military strength, that a war among three ethnic groups fighting within one territory is an invasion, that a defeated nation cannot reconstitute itself, that it is wise to expand the scope of a military alliance while simultaneously weakening it, that war is no longer possible because it has become unthinkable.

They consider every case that comes along as if it were a world unto itself or simply an arena in which to prove their values, refine their careers, or experiment with the new, as if each crisis in foreign relations were not influential in the progression of a more complex order and influenced by it in turn. They build without light and by chance as the abiding forces of the international system race forward unguided.

II

WITH THE passing of the bipolar world the leaders of the West have abandoned what they had once accepted as their first responsibility: to preserve the continental balance of power and by continual adjustment forestall war after war. The critical question is not what to do in Bosnia, or should NATO expand, but what is demanded to avoid a general war in Europe. In this regard the most perilous conduct is improvisation dictated by short-term pressure. Because our political culture is media-driven we tend to focus on effects rather than causes, and so the debate about European security has centered on subordinate considerations.

Were we deliberately to attend to the balance of power, which at its heart is a technique for immobilizing destructive action by disallowing the heady preponderance of any one nation or bloc, lesser problems would be easier of solution. Attention to the context in which they appeared would allow consistent determinations of what loss, defeat, sacrifice, and frustration would be appropriate in their regard. The risks and resources necessary for dealing with Bosnia, for example, should never have been allocated according to what was necessary to preserve the Bosnian state, or for simply humanitarian reasons, or to create object lessons for the former Soviet republics, or to counter an imagined Serbian conquest of Southern Europe. Instead, they should have been apportioned solely according to one criterion: how will action, or abdication, affect the overall equilibrium?

To date we have enjoyed one *laissez-passer* after another. Russia has decided that in view of its own problems and limitations Bosnia is, for the moment at least, outside its sphere of influence. But any one of a number of NATO missteps in Bosnia could have precipitated a different decision. To the objection that even if Russia had decided to counter NATO in Bosnia it simply would not have had the capacity to do so, comes the rejoinder that although Russia may not have the ability to control the situation in the former Yugoslavia, it does retain the power to block control. It could have done this merely by deploying a few airborne divisions in Serbia and making use a few times of the words *rescue*, *friendship*, and *guarantee*. Even had NATO looked to its overwhelming area superiority to face this down, the Russians could have expanded the confrontation to the Baltic states, where *they* have overwhelming area superiority, and we quickly would have been on the road to the old Europe, with every move made in the shadow of the strategic arsenals that you hardly ever hear about anymore.

That something like this has not yet happened has been a matter of luck rather than skill. The unusual unanimity of the Gulf war was like a hundred-year flood, and even this was mainly the province of one or two powers, with others carried in train mainly for the color of their pennants. Someday the accidental coalition of interests will not be so forgiving, not because I am a pessimist or people are bad or Warren Christopher should have stuck to the practice of law, but because nations have affinities, preferences, and allies, and they come to one another's aid even if it means the risk of confrontation, which they often calculate wrongly.

The state of Europe today is analogous to what it was after the Napoleonic wars at the beginning of the last century. Though chastened, humiliated, and stripped of its empire, France was still a major power that, like Russia now, could not be ignored. Having defeated the French with the same blistering shock that it would suffer itself a hundred years on at the hands of the Japanese, Russia pushed to the West, much as NATO is now pushing East.

Between the two were Austria, Poland, Prussia, and Saxony, in varying states of fear, power, or dis-

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repair. And across a narrow band of water was Britain, floating as safely as a moon, and like the contemporary United States wisely unwilling to disengage from the continent.

The Concert of Europe, which brought a peace that although often disturbed did not shatter for a century, was due not only to the rough equilibrium of power after the Napoleonic wars but to the ability of statesmen to sense, appreciate, and solidify it. But in our own utilitarian age, even less likely than architects to care for symmetry, equilibrium, balance, and the mysteries of proportion are statesmen, who, I imagine, do not anymore study maps with the same understanding and purposes of their counterparts in a different era. The beauty and necessity of close attention to maps in the conduct of affairs among nations are that it allows the glimmer of otherwise ineffable relations to show through as spatial expressions. A statesman must retain a vivid image of the lay of the land, and be able to manipulate it to accommodate the passage of armies, the range of missiles, the movement of trade, the meandering of rivers, the direction of railroads, and the accumulation of snows.

From an understanding of such things often flow elegant and extraordinary acts that, in turn, serve to illustrate the principles involved. After Napoleon's defeat of Austria in 1805, Talleyrand urged him to be magnanimous for the purpose of keeping Austria a sound member of the international system. He wanted not only to lessen the chances of Austrian resentment, but also to keep a respectable balance between vanquished and victor. Able to understand that France would benefit more from a system in balance than from yet another triumph, Napoleon agreed. In this, Talleyrand's successors include Castlereagh at the Congress of Vienna some ten years later, and Churchill, who early on came to understand the value of one of his most famous phrases, "In victory, magnanimity." Talleyrand, Castlereagh, and Churchill were led to abhorrence of triumphalism not merely as a matter of character but through an intuitive understanding of the processes of history.

Probably because the United States is remote from the continental system, Americans have always had difficulty accepting balance-of-power politics, frequently mistaking them for the worst form of *Realpolitik*. And yet even if one fails to practice them, one practices them by default. The functioning of a complex system is as much influenced by neglect as by action. Failure to station American troops in Europe during the interwar period was no doubt just as influential in allowing Hitler to act unchecked as their deployment under the North Atlantic Treaty was influential in preventing Soviet hegemony.

Although you cannot avoid playing the game, the worst way to play it is to act within the system while following rules that have no relevance to it. This is what we have been doing since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, under a *laissez-passer* that will expire as soon as new centers of power coalesce—a resurgent Russia, for example, or the German domination of Central Europe. In the balance-of-power perspective, problems abroad look somewhat different than if seen through any other lens, whether it be the glass of human rights or of mercantilism, or the nauseating kaleidoscope of political correctness. Though the very words *balance*, *equilibrium*, and *concert* are beautiful and appealing, from Castlereagh to Kissinger their exponents have been reviled and misunderstood with the same angry frustration romantics reserve for neoclassicists. Regard for the balance of power is anything but the elixir of popularity, requiring as it does openings to longstanding enemies, the seemingly inexplicable abdication of painfully acquired advantage, and what may look like moral disregard but is, rather, the willingness to keep faith with morals while appearing to have abandoned them. Though it is seen as an embrace of power, its successful practice demands, after all, the neutralization of power.

It is this stepping back that the modern age, with its unameliorated passion for control, cannot tolerate. In insatiable activism alloyed with moralism, a bold and shameless faction can go forth into disaster all the while looking good. Not so with the practitioners of balance, who would, for example, rather stand back and let a small war come quickly to its angle of repose than intervene and keep it grinding out casualties for years. At the end of interventions the lines on the ground are often strikingly the same, but the dead always have more time to accumulate. Sometimes intervention is a terrible requirement of worldwide ideological struggle played out on the periphery as signal and symbol, but absent that it is seldom preferable. So to Bosnia.

III

Flush against the Adriatic, shielded from the great expanses of Europe by mountain ranges, and off all major routes, the contested areas of the

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former Yugoslavia are first and foremost irrelevant to the balance of power. Indeed, from the balance-of-power point of view the most urgent requirement was to match their isolation with a quarantine devised to prevent internationalization. This was not, as some would maintain, politically impossible given the effect of repeated and horrific televised images. If it were, we would be witnessing interventions in Rwanda, the Sudan, and elsewhere. In fact, intervention has had from the start three justifications: to stand firm, on the Munich analogy; to save lives; and to keep order in Europe.

The Munich analogy has depended not only on demonizing the Serbs but in attributing to them powers and plans far beyond what they possess. Their interests have always been limited to two-thirds of Bosnia, bits and pieces of Croatia, and perhaps Kosovo: they are not headed for Trieste, much less Paris. The argument that showing firmness in Bosnia is necessary to send a message to tyrants elsewhere, notably in the former Soviet republics, is specious if only because NATO has absolutely no freedom of action in the former republics, and tyrants such as Saddam Hussein make their reputation precisely because they seem inherently deaf to even the most fervent signals. Saving lives is not justifiable as a motivation for intervention if the end result is that more lives are lost in a longer and deadlier war. Order, not the same thing as balance, is a senseless aim if unrelated to other considerations.

The only danger to European security as a whole would be to internationalize the Bosnian war, and therefore the most perilous course is the one we have chosen. Though, thus far, it has not been the cause of hostile alignments, the intervention is in process and the risk remains.

I come to these unorthodox conclusions not as a partisan of the Serbs (who, like the other factions, excuse or deny their own battlefield atrocities) but because of a map. At least as it is understood on the popular level, international action in Bosnia is predicated on an objection to the Serb conquest of what is commonly identified as 70 percent of the territory. It is upon this that their characterization as conquerors and aggressors rests. Reversing the conquests has been the aim of those recommending intervention, while the inability of the peace settlement to do so, by its acquiescence in the existence of a Serb republic, is now their plaint. My difficulty with this point of view begins with the map of the ethnic composition of Yugoslavia, on page 1,102 of the 15th (1978) edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

From the beginning of the conflict to the present day I have contrasted the delineation of Serb-controlled territory, in battle maps, with the *Britannica*'s rendering of the areas where the Serbs live. Except for the areas that the Serbs have recently lost, they are the same.

Although the Serbs engaged in ethnic cleansing in those territories where they have always resided, it is not possible to say that they have conquered them. Those who are unconcerned with maps may have made the determination of Serb conquest *a posteriori*, based on the fact they often cite that the Serbs, although only 30 percent of Bosnia's population, claim 64 percent and have until recently controlled 70 percent of its territory. This is a distributional error. Quite simply, the Serbs are more rural and have bigger landholdings than do their rivals.

After ethnic cleansing one cannot support the Serbs, but how is it possible to support the Croats and Muslims merely because in the first part of the war they did not ethnically cleanse with the same efficiency as their enemy? Prior to the Gulf war I was the first to suggest publicly, in the *Wall Street Journal*, that Iraq be held responsible for war crimes, and I want as strongly as anyone else for the perpetrators of war crimes in the former Yugoslavia to be brought to account. But if we are to adopt as a trigger for intervention the occurrence of war crimes or other inhuman acts, we shall need an army of twenty million men.

DOES ALL this mean that in preserving the balance of power its advocates are prepared to stand back as the terror of civil wars unfolds? Yes, if it is necessary to prevent a general war in Europe, a world war. By no means, however, is the balance-of-power perspective impotent in regard to problems on a lesser scale. The civil war in Bosnia would have ended long ago with far fewer casualties had it been allowed to find its own equilibrium absent UN prolongation. But this would not have been the only option.

At the time of the original Bosnian secession from Yugoslavia a statesman alert to matters of equilibrium would have treated favorably the Bosnian Serbs' consequent desire for amalgamation with Serbia. Because the Bosnian Serbs were already where they were, the aggrandizement of Serbia would have been little more than a change in nomenclature that could in no way disturb the state system in Europe. He would have mobilized the international community to press for a partition and population exchange aided by the leading

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powers. They who insisted from the very beginning on preserving the artificially drawn Bosnian borders were horrified at the idea of a partition and population exchange. And yet, it may have been possible to accomplish this without the death of a single person.

But humanitarians often are uncomfortable with imperfection. And stepping back into the shadows to allow the division of Bosnia would have contradicted their very modern desire to program the entire course of events to fit the lines that Tito drew on a map that they do not even care to look at.

IV

Like Spain in the 30's, Bosnia is a creature of the margins which draws blood that should be flowing toward the center. Remarkably, the marginal issue is generally approached with gravitas and fear, while the crux is treated with casual indifference. This, the drive to expand NATO eastward, represents much more than the simple augmentation of the alliance. It is a decision, albeit unconscious, to ignore the balance of power in Europe, and never has such a gambit failed to drive the continent toward war. Imbalance throws one side onto the defensive while tempting the other to intimidation. The anxiety that arose from this during the cold war is something that need not but will be replicated if NATO is unfurled toward the Russian steppe.

Though the campaign for NATO expansion is driven primarily by the desire to protect what once were the Soviet satellites, it swells from time to time with initiatives to shield one or another former Soviet republic, it includes various characters who hide in think tanks like nuts in a pudding and want to push American power to the Urals, it is a bit of splendid overkill from those who worry as I do about a resurgent Russia, and it provides a perfect answer to the fatuous question, "What shall we do with NATO?"

Ukraine, a state at present possessing 136 MIRV'd ICBMs and 44 strategic bombers, is like a battered divorcée whose jealous husband lives upstairs and will never die. Forever linked to Russia, Ukraine is closer to Moscow than Boston is to Syracuse. And yet in early 1994 the President of the United States apparently saw fit to guarantee its border. Perhaps Mr. Clinton was subsequently dogged by the realization that he would be unable to honor such a commitment except with strategic nuclear weapons, or perhaps he just felt pressed to make another commitment, for ten months later at a joint news conference with the Ukrainian president he said, "I would not say or do anything that would exclude the possibility of Ukrainian membership" in NATO.

To understand the Russian view of NATO extension, and justifiably or not the Russian view will determine Russian behavior, imagine a United States after its collapse under pressure from the Warsaw Pact. Antonov military transports land at American airports with loads of food and sundries. While inflation rages, hordes of Soviet and East European apparatchiks take over the best hotels in American cities, fanning out each day to appropriate businesses and instruct their executives in nationalization and socialist management techniques. Crime such as we have never seen makes the streets hell, American women in unprecedented numbers prostitute themselves for the chance to obtain luxuries from ruble stores, and the young want to dress like Cossacks (well, they do anyway, or, rather, who can tell?). On top of all this, the Soviets, who do exactly as they please in Europe, want to include Canada and Mexico in the Warsaw Pact, talk of and perhaps sign secret agreements guaranteeing the borders of independent California, and worry that reactionary elements in the dazed American military speak publicly of taking back Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

Like every nation, the Russians have legitimate interests, and with no natural obstructions between Moscow and the Polish border they would have to be possessed of less than normal fear and abnormal bravery not to react to NATO expansion. And in NATO's present state, expansion cannot be other than overextension. Suffice it to say that from a military point of view it is a slow-motion parody of earlier French and German invasions, with lines of supply that are far too long, estimates of enemy capacity that are insufficiently generous, and mortal lack of attention to geography. With an immense military build-up, which will not occur, it would be possible to stage eastward, consolidate, and solidify the expansion. By the time that was accomplished, however, Russia would be deep in the throes of rearmament, and compromising even the most advantageous calculations of force would be the presence of equal and potent strategic arsenals.

Why provoke a defeated enemy merely for the sake of a preponderance of advantage that, if history has any validity, is certain to destabilize the entire continent? The proponents of expansion, I believe, simply have not considered the

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continental balance as a whole, have not accomplished the proper historical reckonings, and are moved almost entirely by what remains their strongest argument: that the West simply cannot abandon an integral part of itself, namely Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. Some would carry that logic further to include the Baltic Republics and Ukraine.

Although the West has managed to do just that for most of its history, and could do so again, and although the fate of these nations is a function of geography more than of our moral character, it is certainly true that it would be a great shame to abandon them to future Russian hegemony. What is both striking and opportune is that their independence is important to us not merely because we are sympathetic, but as a matter of avoiding its opposite, their subservience to a Russian military alliance and our consequent loss of strategic depth.

We and the Russians have in regard to these states the same interests and the same fears. Neither we nor they wish to surrender the roughly 400 miles of separation between us. Both we and they have a visceral aversion to the circumstance in which the other enjoys a preponderance of power in appropriating to itself the neutral zone. We never rested when the Red Army was only 700 miles from Paris, and they shall never rest if NATO (which to Russia in this instance means primarily Germany) establishes itself on the Polish border 500 miles from Moscow and St. Petersburg.

In this symmetry of interests and fears lies an extraordinary opportunity that, if taken at the flood, could bestow upon Europe a durable peace such as that which followed the Congress of Vienna. Throughout the 19th century the greater balance was stable enough to weather revolutions and minor wars even at its heart, because in the calm after the storm of the Napoleonic wars Castlereagh's main objective was an intermediary system between France and Russia that would prevent the aggrandizement of either and keep them safely apart. His task was to strengthen the bloc of Austria, Prussia, and Saxony while keeping it, too, in balance, and, in testament to his design, only when Austria weakened irreparably a hundred years later did the European system collapse.

From the Baltic to Trieste lies a belt of relatively weak states that in alliance would threaten neither East nor West, that possess the potential military power to deter quick conquest, and that as a strengthened center could serve as the pivot upon which the two historically antagonistic blocs might rest in assuring balance. Radiating outward from the central triangle Warsaw-Prague-Budapest would be the neutral Baltic Republics and Finland to the north, neutral Austria and Switzerland to the west, the neutral former Yugoslavia to the south, and the neutral Ukraine to the east. Very briefly, the fundamental structure would include a clear declaration of neutrality, the development of north-south transportation routes, Western economic aid, the creation of a free-trade area, and the organization of a military alliance (based on the Swiss and Swedish models) for the defense of the core states. Unlike the former Soviet republics, each of these states has previously and successfully positioned itself between blocs.

THE NATIONS of Central Europe are now anxiously pleading for incorporation in NATO, but this will lead to the opposite of what is in their basic interest. I would warrant, for example, that Ukraine's greatest hope of continuing independence would lie not in promiscuous and collapsible guarantees but in its transformation into an eastward step to Castlereagh's strong center, and I am surprised that the governments of the center seem to believe that safety lies in tilting one way or another.

If they lean toward the preponderant power, they are vassals, and if they lean away it feels it must swallow them. Like Western Europe, which for so long has enjoyed the ideal protection of a patron from which it is politely separated by 3,000 miles of deep ocean, the states of the center instinctively seek alliance with the powers that do not crush against them. Naturally Western Europe is a far more attractive partner than Russia, economically and in view of its reliable commitment to liberal democracy. But all this will be to no avail if it is overdone, if it elicits from Russia a reaction of anger and panic, as certainly it will when the Russians, who look at maps and play chess, contemplate what they may still refer to as the correlation of forces.

How can a structure of neutrality and placidity be engineered from the raw material of states that are unstable and weak? If, indeed, they are, far better to build them into a buffer than to ally with them directly and be dragged wherever they cannot help going. The millions of ethnic Russians in the eastern sections of Ukraine, for example, are potentially a problem of irredentism that exactly parallels that of the Serbs in Bosnia but on an immensely grander scale.

Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and the others are weak and unstable in varying degree, as one would

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expect of real nations in real life. Their interrelations must, in turn, be approached with the same care for balance as the relations among the blocs. No grand design absolves Western Europe, for example, from attending to its own internal frictions. Castlereagh's problems in fashioning the intermediary system arose less from the overall scheme than from maintaining a secondary equilibrium among the states of the center. In these things there is no end to caution and oversight, which is not only part of the challenge but a substantial part of the appeal. The system cannot be static, for a conception celebrated with no expectation that it will evolve will petrify like Marxism and pitch forward from its pedestal like a statue.

Why not treat Russia as an equal partner in guaranteeing the security of the center through a system of treaties that would formalize the design and remain subject to emendation so as to accommodate the inevitable changes over time? The arrangements would draw their strength not from the treaties but from the utility and appeal of the fundamental structure of which the treaties would be a clarifying expression. In this regard it may be useful to note that lawyers spend their lives dealing with cases as they come up, ad hoc, without reference to a whole. They are trained to work in a world of fictions in which they do not suffer the consequences of what they do, and an external sovereignty exists to enforce the agreements they write. None of this has any resemblance to international relations, in which the presence of lawyers is mainly a distraction and a danger. And yet our Secretaries of State tend to be precisely the lawyers who make the technical part so throbbing and the imaginative part so dull. What a pity, for nations will confound hopes and predictions and throw over the contracts of the law, at which point the lawyers will turn and say, this thing that we thought amenable to prediction and bound by agreement, this thing that we thought we could control with the logic of our profession is something else entirely, is a creature of passion, a matter of art.

The creation of a strong intermediary system in Europe, a belt of neutral states, should be the first priority in the foreign relations of the United States. To forgo such an opportunity now would be the equivalent of imposing the badly structured peace of Versailles, of not moving against Hitler early, and of the Soviet rejection of the Baruch plan for the international control of atomic weapons. It will leave the field open to hastily improvised policies that arise from habit. Whether the habit be reflexive cowardice and appeasement or the blunt and stupid love for a fight, it will not likely be appropriate to a new set of forces in a new pattern of action. And yet it is doubtful that in the upper levels of a Department of State run like a personal-injury law firm anyone has given this a thought. They are too busy with unrelated cases to understand the elemental conception that applies to all.

Perhaps if a Republican President is elected in 1996 he will have both motivation and the time remaining to give some thought to the classical balance of power and its beckoning opportunities for our age and circumstances, but he shall have to overcome or disregard isolationists, pacifists, and those who know naught but to seek ephemeral advantage, and he shall have to move with dispatch, for we cannot float in these still waters forever.

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The Soul of Man Under Physics

David Berlinski

WHAT IS it? A sense of unease, perhaps, some persistent feeling, as the century slips into the darkness, that the larger structures of scientific thought and sentiment are disembodied, disorderly somehow. The feeling is familiar, like the taste of tea. A long moment in our collective experience is coming to an end.

The British novelist (and physicist) C.P. Snow argued in the golden 1950's that contemporary culture had acquired two contentious heads, the one scientific, the other humanistic, each unable to understand the other and both committed to commandeering the conversation. Snow's diagnosis exacerbated the disease: intellectual life seemed suddenly to divide along a fissure separating those who understood the second law of thermodynamics from those who did not. There ensued a period of comical soul-searching, as literary critics in particular realized with dismay that, just as Snow had suggested, they were incapable of following a rudimentary scientific argument. Viewed from the perspective of the present, the whole episode takes on an ineffable air of poignancy, the 1950's comprising perhaps the last years in which educated men retained the capacity to be embarrassed by their ignorance.

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Today the rich fruity preposterous discourse of the academic Left would seem to suggest that Snow's bifurcated culture has become flamboyantly fractured. Like a glass pane struck a sharp blow, the large project of the physical sciences has been shown at last to be socially regressive, or politically hegemonistic, or hopelessly gendered, or ethnically contaminated, or simply anachronistic. Quantum mechanics, after all, was anticipated—so we are told—by proud African warriors, men who in the Sudan or the marshes of the Nile conveyed Schrödinger's wave equation as an oral tradition.

The contemporary American philosopher John Searle has struck a countervailing note. Having heard out Indian philosophers convinced that in past lives they had been Pakistanis, or were destined in future lives to become Pakistanis once again, Searle affirmed magisterially that the "contemporary scientific world view is simply not up for grabs." The Darwinian theory of evolution and the atomic theory of matter are irrefragable.

It is wonderful that Searle should think to uphold two 19th-century theories that could both vanish into the void without affecting the contemporary scientific world view in the slightest. Still, he is right in his larger purpose. It is *one* culture that we now inhabit, and not two or ten thousand. Some part of the ache that today affects the human heart arises, indeed, from a kind of intellectual claustrophobia, a sense that a single and perhaps alien system of thought has somehow preempted

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the possibilities for the description of the universe, the consolation of the soul.

Re-creation and Revelation

SOMETIME IN the 17th century, the dry tinder of discovery, struck profitlessly throughout so many long centuries, blazed suddenly into life. The physical sciences came into creation. That is the common view, and it is completely correct. Before the 17th century there was nothing, and afterward, everything.

Myth places the miracle at the moment Isaac Newton conceived the idea that gravity might control both the fall of objects toward the center of the earth *and* the movement of the planets in the night sky. But the miracle was in fact divided, one half physical, the other mathematical, and it was the mathematical miracle that struck the deeper. Before the laws of nature could be revealed and then recorded, the real world had to be re-created in terms of the real numbers.

The real numbers—not only the natural, or counting, numbers but zero, the negative numbers, the fractions, and the irrational numbers as well—entered the Western imagination in the 16th and 17th centuries, the creation of ebullient Italian geometers and mathematicians. Creation is the right word, signifying as it does a spontaneous intellectual act, one that brings something into being. But whatever their origins, the real numbers also have a workaday identity, one that is expressible in terms of their infinite decimal expansion. The square root of two may thus be expressed as 1.41421356 . . . , with the dots indicating a continuously evolving identity as ever more numbers are added to the list. With these strange rich numbers in place, the number system is in a certain sense *complete*. The thing is contained in itself. It is whole. There are no gaps where the numbers simply lapse.

The introduction of the real numbers allowed the landscape of mathematical analysis to be suffused with a thrilling light, one akin in its own way to the light that may be seen or sensed in the great Renaissance paintings. In that lit-up landscape, the infinite was, for the first time in history, charmed into compliance. Men gained the eerie power to ask of certain processes: *suppose they go on forever, what then?*

Within the scheme of thought known as the calculus, discovered almost simultaneously by Gottfried Leibniz and Newton, they found an entirely comprehensible answer. Relationships between and among numbers could be expressed by the flexible and finely geared instrument of a function, an invention that permitted mathematicians to describe numerical patterns as if they were living processes. The concept of a limit made its first appearance on the mathematical stage, denoting the place where certain things tend and then accumulate. (As the fractions get smaller and smaller, for example, they tend inexorably toward a limit at zero.) Sequences were given voice, and strange series contemplated; hidden for centuries from human sight, an array of mathematical operations and processes became for the first time visible.

The creation of the real number system and its perfection in the calculus represented an inward explosion, one that took place against the backdrop of a larger, outward explosion: the realization by the great natural philosophers of the 17th century that these same real numbers might be assigned to physical magnitudes such as force, mass, and distance, thus creating an essentially quantitative representation of the world. To be sure, human beings since time immemorial had used the numbers to count and to measure and to reckon. As the animals trooped aboard the ark, Noah, no doubt, ticked them off on his fingertips, two by two. But the representation of the real world in terms of the real numbers was different. It was a richer and more compelling representation, one that for the very first time allowed some ineffable abstract aspect of things to be localized on a computational canvas.

It was change under the aspect of continuity, the very mutability of matter, that was captured on that canvas. Continuity is a manifestation of seamlessness: continuous processes do not break, or snap, or interrupt themselves. And continuity is a physical as well as a mathematical property. It lights up the night sky as the stars crawl solemnly across the heavens. The undulating quantum wave occupying all portions of an infinite dimensional Hilbert space is continuous, and so is the great worm of time that humps and slithers its way through the theory of relativity.

The calculus is humanity's great meditation on the theme of continuity, and the concentration on continuous change is what mysteriously lends to the calculus its diamond-hard edge, its uncanny powers of specificity.

THE REPRESENTATION that mathematics affords of the real world is not complete—no symbolic instrument is ever fully adequate to real-

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ity—but it is larger and more spacious and more commanding than any before discovered. Still, a representation can only do so much, namely, reconvey an aspect of reality, the familiar world finding itself peeping from an unfamiliar mirror. The larger promise of the physical sciences has always been that some striking *revelation* lies behind the new, the odd and unfamiliar representation, some way of coordinating appearances and enforcing a sense of order on the vagaries of things.

The world, the physical sciences affirm, is not merely depictable, but *comprehensible*. It has a rational structure. It is animated by a great plan. The catalogue of its facts may be compressed into a few infinitely pregnant laws. There is a form of words adequate to the complexity of experience.

These words mathematics does not in itself provide. They arise when the detritus of experience is sifted by a profound physical imagination—Newton, for example, discovering that all objects in the material universe attract one another in proportion to their mass and in inverse proportion to the square of the distance between them. In the tide of time, there have been only four absolutely fundamental physical theories: Newtonian mechanics; Clerk Maxwell's theory of electromagnetism; Einstein's theory of relativity; and quantum mechanics. They stand in history like the staring stone statues on Easter Island, blank-eyed and monumental.

Each theory is embedded in a continuous mathematical representation of the world; each succeeds in amalgamating far-flung processes and properties into a single, remarkably compressed affirmation, a tight intellectual knot. The supreme expression of each theory is a single mathematical law, one expressed as an equation: a statement in which something that is unknown is specified by contingencies arranged in a certain way. And each of the great theories contains far more than it states, the laws of nature fantastically compressed, as if they were quite literally messages from a timeless intellect.

The Conquest of Time

ENTERTAINING FAINT impressions from the far side of the cosmos, where the dust-clouded galaxies wink and shine forlornly, the human eye can convey a human being to the raveled edge of space. But looking anxiously into time and forever asking, *when*—when shall I find love, when happiness, when God?—the soul is shrouded, its basilisk eye unseeing. The past lies fixed and frozen back there somewhere; the future is not only indeterminate and incomplete but opaque, the horizon lit up by only a few large and gloomy certainties: death, taxes, feminism. Human beings are suspended between the unknowable and the inevitable, the place they have always occupied and the place, one suspects, they will always occupy.

The great physical theories provide an exception to this depressing human condition; they are given over to the conquest of time. Under their influence, the universe becomes temporally transparent, at least in part. The conquest of time is written into the symbolic instruments of the physical sciences, their very way of describing things. The laws of nature specify processes in the world, as when (say) a philosopher dropped from a great height accelerates toward the center of the earth, his position changing at every passing moment.

The instruments of discovery within the physical sciences are differential equations. Like equations everywhere, they express a relationship but conceal an unknown. Solving the equation is, just as in elementary algebra, a matter of uncovering the unknown, and the extraordinary feature of the calculus is that it clears a way in which such equations may *in general* be solved.

The result is an instrument of remarkable power. Galileo's law of falling bodies, for example, gives direction not only to the philosopher flying downward but to objects in free fall everywhere. That philosopher having commenced his descent by slipping (so I imagine) on a copy of Carl Sagan's *Cosmos*, one left carelessly on a narrow mountain ledge, Galileo's law controls events thereafter, predicting precisely where the philosopher will be at every subsequent moment, the law unraveling forward in time like film thread moving over sprockets, the philosopher flash-frozen frame by frame, from the moment of his initial spastic efforts to regain his balance to his comic cartwheeling in space and thence to the final ignominious wet plop some seconds later when he becomes one again with the Platonic forms which in life afforded him such satisfaction.

Nice, eh? The law of nature, I mean; and nice in the way it reveals in miniature how the physical sciences penetrate the future: by the successful combination of local circumstances—*he started out here*—with universal and deterministic processes—Galileo's law. The laws of nature are general. A local flash ties them to place and time, the contingent circumstances of the real world, whereupon they acquire prophetic powers, the specification of

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the particular acting as a flare illuminating an ancient text.

The *predictable future* is the exuberant manifestation of the Western scientific imagination. Eyebrows waggling and bony fingers pointing, the great scientists stand and control the flow of time, investing their calculations with a retrospective sense of inevitability, if not of moral urgency. So entrenched by now is this notion of the predictable future that it has become a category of consciousness and discourse, a familiar intellectual fixture, one derived from the very nature of description itself.

In contemporary culture, to be sure, prophecy is a debased currency, the prophets bunched up on television where they may be found offering astrological advice on love and work. But the mathematical sciences are entirely different. In physics, prophecies command a degree of accuracy that must be reckoned miraculous. Quantum electrodynamics penetrates the very heart of matter to something like twenty decimal places. It is as if, in determining the distance from New York to Los Angeles, theory and measurement would diverge by no more than the width of a single human hair.

The great theories, singular in so many ways, are singular in this as well: no other intellectual accomplishment exhibits their prophetic powers. In them, pure thought and physical experience coincide to a degree never achieved in any other domain of intellectual or practical life—coincide, that is, to a degree unparalleled in the entire experience of the race, enabling human beings to achieve a specification of points and places in the future utterly at odds with our habitual inability to say where our keys may have been misplaced, or our hearts lost.

Chaos, Randomness, Complexity

But now it is undergoing dissolution, the predictable future. Quantum mechanics served long ago to introduce a note of alien doubt into the deterministic scheme, countenancing a view of the subatomic world in which quanta bounce around for no good reason whatsoever and measurements are bound by an iron collar of uncertainty. But quantum mechanics has long been recognized as unfathomable, its formulas a series of vatic inscriptions no one can read without going blind. Current corrosives are simpler; they have nothing directly to do with the quantum world. They are chaos, randomness, and complexity.

Chaos first. The idea is very simple. Certain systems may be both deterministic *and* unstable. An example is a baseball bat balanced on its end. Left unperturbed, it may remain upright until the end of time. This is one of its destinies. Given a tiny tap, it falls over promptly, thus embracing a quite different destiny. Chaos arises when the bat is embedded in the flow of time. From where it is, there is no real saying where it is going.

More than 90 years ago, the French mathematician Henri Poincaré observed that simple but nonlinear systems might well exhibit chaotic behavior. And he drew the correct conclusion that such systems, even though governed by deterministic equations, were inherently unpredictable. His ideas were left unperturbed for a time but, given a tap in the 1940's and 1950's, became a part of common scientific currency by means of an unusual route.

The weather, Edward Lorenz suggested in 1963, might be *essentially* unpredictable (a conclusion many of us have come to on our own). Certain physical regimes—like certain households—are intrinsically chaotic; small changes in their initial states lead over time to dramatic and unsettling changes in their evolution. Beating its delicate and translucent wings in Borneo, a butterfly might bring about a tornado in Toledo. Like an upright bat, the earth's atmosphere is a system sensitively dependent on its initial conditions.

Having been read and chuckled over by a dozen or so professionals, Lorenz's paper sank promptly from sight. In the 1970's it underwent a spectacular resurrection; it is now widely regarded as prescient. Evidence of chaos has been discerned in phenomena ranging from planetary astronomy to nerve excitation in the giant squid. Outside of science as well, chaos has become an immensely fashionable term of diagnosis, an explanation for every living shambles. And why not? Both ordinary language and ordinary life seem hideously sensitive to small perturbations. An errant hiccup might have induced Gavrilo Princip to miss the Archduke entirely at Sarajevo, with Bosnia-Herzegovina becoming, over the placid decades since 1914, the Switzerland of Southern Europe.

Chaos is a cultural corrosive, one dissolving the tight connection between a deterministic mathematical model and the delivery of a predictable future. In a chaotic system, the very act of measurement induces uncertainty, for no measurement is entirely accurate; imperceptible errors grow exponentially, cascading along the system until the real world and the measured world seem utterly unlike. Chaos introduces something novel in the physical sciences, a pragmatic sense of inescapable error; it

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compromises the miracle of quantitative prediction, and returns the imagination to an older view of life and experience. The future *is* clouded. We *do* live amid ineradicable uncertainty.

If chaos is one corrosive, randomness is another. A trite and a tired concept, randomness denotes a statistical property of sequences, but one that is difficult to discern and even more difficult to define. The morganatic cousin of meaninglessness in French movies—as when a breathless hoodlum, ending his one chance for happiness, whimsically shoots a policeman—randomness has received a revivifying interpretation in recent years, thanks to the great Russian mathematician Andrei Kolmogorov and to the American mathematician Gregory Chaitin. Influenced no doubt by morphic resonance, Kolmogorov and Chaitin observed a sympathetic current running between randomness and the concept of complexity. The juxtaposition yields an extraordinary idea, one that captures something long sensed but never quite specified.

Here is an illustration. A painting by Jackson Pollock is complex in the sense that nothing short of the painting conveys what the painting itself conveys. As I look at those curiously compelling, variegated, aggressive streaks and slashes, words fail me. In order to describe the painting, I must display it. An Andy Warhol painting, by way of comparison, subordinates itself to a verbal formula: *just run that soup can up and down the page, Andy.*

This, however, is to remain within the realm of rhetoric. The mathematician attends not to paintings but to binary sequences—strings of 0's and 1's. Now a computer program is itself a string of symbols (binary numbers, in fact). A given string is simple, Chaitin and Kolmogorov argued, if the string may be generated by a computer program significantly shorter than the string itself; otherwise, it is complex.

This tight little declaration begins to explain the large irrelevance that now envelops the mathematical sciences. The laws of nature—those compressed and gnomic affirmations—pertain, on the one hand, to the largescale structures of space and time and, on the other hand, to the jiggling fundaments of the quantum world. Simplicity reigns amid the very large and the very small, and it is there that things may be mathematically described. And yet most strings and thus most things are not simple but complex. They cannot be more simply conveyed; they are what they are, insusceptible of compression. And this is an easily demonstrated, an indubitable, mathematical fact.

It is the world's complexity that is humanly interesting. What do we see when we look elsewhere? Stars blazing glumly in the night sky, the moons of Jupiter hanging like so many testicles, clouds of cosmic dust, an immensity of space, a spare but irritating sound track consisting of the infernal chatter of background radiation. The evidence seems inescapable that the Creator wrought the simple structures in the universe with a few swift strokes of an instrument much like a cosmic trowel. In our own corner of the composition, by contrast, He apparently set to work with a sable-tipped paintbrush, patiently fashioning a blue planet, a lush garden, creatures utterly unlike anything else in the universe, sensuous, moving, alive.

We live within the confines of that canvas. Complexity is everywhere, whether created or contrived, and compression hard to come by—in truth, the human world cannot be much compressed at all. The most we can typically do, a few resolute morals or maxims aside, is to watch the panorama unfold, surprised as always by the turbulent and unsuspected flow of things, the gross but fascinating cascade of life.

A Polytheistic Universe

THE CALCULUS is the great idealization of Western science; from within its crabbed formulas comes the master plan of equation-and-solution that makes the physical sciences possible. Yet the investiture of mathematics in things and processes weakens as one moves along the intellectual chain of command. This is a curious and disabling fact. Material objects on the quantum level may be explained as roiling waves of probability. By contrast, the attempt to discern the outlines of a coherent system of mathematical thought in the structure of biological objects—protozoa, rock stars, human beings—has been a failure.

From one perspective, the conceptual landscape of biology resembles a range of ancient foothills folded against the mathematician's high alpine peaks. The biologist employs a scheme immeasurably simpler than the one adopted by the mathematical physicist. It is, that scheme, discrete, finite, and combinatorial. No mathematics beyond finger counting.

Living systems may be understood in terms of the constituents that make them up, and of these, there are only finitely many. The dissection complete, what remains is a master molecule, DNA, which functions as a code, and the complicated proteins that it organizes and controls. No continuous magnitudes; no real numbers; no rich body of

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mathematical analysis. No laws, not in the sense in which physics contains laws of nature; no fantastically pregnant, compressed, and quantitative apothegms. Molecular biology should be comprehensible to someone who knows nothing of modern science, continuity, or the calculus, and who can reckon only to powers of ten—a Harvard graduate, say.

Despite the often vulgar language in which they are expressed, the concepts that animate molecular biology are old, familiar, haunting: system, information, code, language, message, organization. They often affirm a message already known: "one generation passeth away and another generation cometh." They are magical in their nature and effect. DNA, in particular, functions as a kind of biochemical demiurge, something that brings an entire organism into existence by a process akin to a casting of spells. They are often inconsistent: the role attributed to DNA is at odds with the obvious fact that the information resident in the genome is inadequate to specify the whole of a complex organism. Like a rubber band under tension, the concepts of molecular biology seem always to snap back to some earlier way of describing life, one in which *purpose* and *design* come prominently into focus.

And they seem, these concepts, often to mark the very margins of our own intellectual inadequacy. Nowhere in nature do we ever observe purely mechanical forces between large molecules giving rise to self-contained, stable, and autonomous structures like a frog or a fern, something able to carry on as a continuous arc from first to last, a physical object changing over time but remaining the *same* object at every stage, some set of forces endowing its identity with permanence so that variations remain bounded and inevitably return the object to the place from which it started. Nothing but a living system exhibits this extraordinary combination of plasticity and stability, a fact we are barely able to describe and entirely unable to explain.

Molecular biology is immune to the great idealization that marks the physical sciences; and what is more, it seems retrograde to the grand metaphysical assumptions on which the physical sciences rest. Those assumptions have passed directly into popular culture. The world, the physical sciences affirm almost with one voice, is physical and not spiritual, numinous, or mental. It is a world of matter. The doctrine of consideration in contract law and the bright bubble of consciousness are illusions. Reality contains only atoms and the void.

But if, by "physical," physical scientists mean concepts like the concepts found in physics, then the conclusion is irresistible that molecular biology is not a physical science at all, but a discipline struggling to express the properties of living systems in a vocabulary and by means of concepts unlike those needed elsewhere. What we see when we *look* at the observable universe is that one god like dark Pluto rules the quantum underworld; quite another, the biological macromolecules.

Physicists reject such a frankly polytheistic view, of course. The laws of physics are controlling, they say, and in the end everything will be made clear. That is what they always say; it is their destiny to say it. But in truth the grand vision of all of human knowledge devolving toward mathematical physics is no longer taken seriously, even by physicists who take it seriously.

"The most extreme hope for science," the physicist Steven Weinberg has written (in his *Dreams of a Final Theory*, 1993), "is that we will be able to trace the explanation of all natural phenomena to final laws *and historical accidents*" (emphasis added). Machiavelli used the word *fortuna* to describe the inexplicable adjurations of fate; it is a word that communicates a certain grave mockery. How has mathematical physics informed the human heart if the explanation for the way things are involves an appeal to fundamental laws *and* to something like a Neapolitan shrug?

Mind Over Matter

An uneasy sense prevails—it has long prevailed—that the vision of a purely physical universe is somehow incomplete. We are creatures with rich and various mental experiences. We live in a world of purpose, belief, intention, and meaning. We bring the future into being by the free exercise of our will, a circumstance that mathematical physics is unable to describe, let alone explain. And we are conscious, we have minds.

The great body of continuous mathematics has played no role in the explanation or description of the human mind (however much its very existence may express the powers of that mind). But within living memory a bright new world has been organized to rival the old cunning and continuous world of the physical sciences. Gone is Freud's model of the mind as a haunted house (superego/ego/id); it has been replaced by the powerful image of the mind as a computational device. Careers have been fashioned to accommodate and exploit that image. Unpleasant young people pro-

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claim themselves weird or wired, involve themselves in trendy little magazines, and sprawl over the Internet. The descriptive resources of the English language have been altered, often to risible effect, the term "digital" emerging from the proctologist's vernacular to become a general adjective of choice. "Life is just bytes and bytes of digital information," the biologist Richard Dawkins writes obligingly in *River Out of Eden* (1995). "Pure information," a reviewer adds loyally.

The foundations of the new view were laid more than 60 years ago by a congregation of chalky logicians: the great Kurt Gödel, Alonzo Church, Emil Post, and, of course, the odd and utterly original A.M. Turing, whose lost spirit seems to roam anxiously over the second half of the 20th century like one of F. Scott Fitzgerald's sad young men. (*Fortuna*, again.)

Turing's simple model of a computing machine is the first of humanity's *intellectual* artifacts. The machine itself is a device for the manipulation of symbols, and since symbols are abstract, a Turing machine may be realized in any medium in which symbols can be inscribed. Given symbols as input, a Turing machine returns symbols as output, reading, writing, and erasing them on an infinitely extended tape. In a sense, of course, that is what lovers and lawyers do as well, the lover using his warm breath, the lawyer foolscap, each making his point by means of an inscription or exchange of symbols.

A Turing machine undertakes its transformations by means of a *program*: a fixed set of rules setting out what it may do and when it may do it. These rules are formal, in the sense that they make no appeal to the machine's emotions or thoughts, but they also reflect the ineliminable purposes of the system's programmer, enabling the machine to realize his aims or ends.

The essential elements of a Turing machine are the symbols it manipulates, the tape on which it writes, the mechanism by which it sees, and the program by which it acts; indeed, these are the essentials of the computational act itself, the process by which intelligence records its thoughts. The extraordinary, spine-chilling, contrary-to-intuition thing is that this imaginary object not only led historically to the construction of the digital computer itself—a striking example of thought bringing matter into existence—but also in some sense exhausts the very concept of rule-governed behavior. *Whatever* may be done by a discrete system moving in steps may be done by a Turing machine.

TO THE question of how best to describe change, the answer provided by the physical sciences over the course of 300 years has been a system of mathematical equations. Another answer, one new in our experience, is a program. The difference between the two is profound. A program *does* what an equation describes. Equations are indirect, they must be solved. A program is direct, it must be executed. Equations are continuous; programs discontinuous. Equations are infinite; programs finite. The elements of an equation are numbers; the elements of a program are words. An equation penetrates the future; a program does not.

As these distinctions suggest, the vision of the mind as a computational object is—no less than molecular biology—retrograde to the great movements of mathematical physics. In the physical sciences, time and space are represented by the real numbers and (therefore) have a continuous structure. A computer, by contrast, inhabits a world in which time, represented by the ordinary integers, has lost its pliant seamlessness and moves forward in jerky integral steps. A stern series of renunciations is in force. No differential equations. No connection backward to the calculus. No world-defining symmetries of space and time. No analytic continuation, as when the laws of nature conduct the physicist from the present into the future. No quantitative miracles. No miracles at all—provided one excepts the ordinary achingly human ones.

For under this new conceptual order, the prevailing direction of scientific thought has been altered and reversed. Within mathematical physics, things move dissectively, toward the fundamental objects and their fundamental properties and laws. The physical universe itself remains meaningless. The arena controlled by the fundamental laws, though vast, is sterile, the whole thing rather like a fluorescent-lit bowling alley where balls the size of quarks forever ricochet off one another in the hot and soundless night. Down there, no human voices may be heard.

But up here, things are different; they have always been different. Invoking a rich system of meaning and interpretation, human beings explain themselves to themselves in terms of what they wish and what they believe, the immemorial instincts of desire and conviction being sufficient to bring a world into being. That world is suspended in space by the chatter of human voices. A path through the chatter is not dissective, but almost always circular. A man believes that alfalfa sprouts

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are a cure for shingles; this is reflected in what he says, in what he does, in what he believes, and in what he wishes, each reflection explaining the one that has gone before, the circle beginning to bend back on itself.

There is no way to break the circle to reach a bedrock of physical fact, for there are no physical facts to reach. How could there be? To enter the circle, any purely physical feature of the world must be interpreted and given meaning. Once given meaning, it is no longer purely a physical feature of the world. Under the computational theory of mind, the conceptual circle is not emptied or evacuated, it is enlarged, the formal objects taking their place like guests at a wedding asked to join the dance. The states of a computer carry a significance that goes beyond physics; like words, they play a role in the economy of meaning. And meaning appears only in the reflective and interpretive gaze of human beings.

This point is evident in the simplest of devices. Call twice for the numeral "2" on a calculator and the machine returns a neoned "4." Considered simply as a physical object, the machine is shuttling among shapes, configurations of light, which it realizes by means of the way in which it is constructed: it is capable of nothing else. What makes the charming show of light an *answer* is the fact that someone has been provoked to ask a question. Question and answer belong to the circle of human voices. A purely physical process has been invested with significance, those winking ruby lights given form and content as symbols, representations. Whether the representation is made in terms of light or by the modulation of a woman's voice, the process is always the same. Some feature of the world has been made incandescent.

Consciousness

Streaming in from space, light reaches the human eye and deposits its information on the stippled surface of the retina. Directly thereafter I see the great lawn of Golden Gate Park; a young woman, nose ring twitching; a panting puppy; a rose bush; and beyond, a file of cars moving sedately toward the western sun. A three-dimensional world has been conveyed to a two-dimensional surface and then reconveyed to a three-dimensional image.

This familiar miracle suggests, if anything does, the relevance of algorithms to the actual accomplishments of the mind; indeed, the transformation of dimensions is precisely the kind of activity that might be brought under the control of a formal program, a system of rules cued to the circumstances of vision as it takes place in a creature with two matched but somewhat asymmetrical eyes. David Marr, for example, provides (in *Vision*, 1982) an extraordinary account of the complex transformations undertaken in the mind's cockpit in order to allow the eyes to see things stereoptically.

In a charming book entitled *Descartes' Error* (1994), Antonio R. Damasio writes of the mind as a place where neural representations, or images, arise. Having concluded correctly, say, that a football is heading toward one's nose, the mind signs off on the formal portion of its visual deliberations by means of a vibrant image (and signals the head to duck). This language of representations and images is general throughout the cognitive sciences. The mind, apparently, stores the stuff in various places and then hauls down a representation or two when the need arises.

But wait a minute. Representations? Images? As in, something seen? *In* the mind? But seen by *whom*? And just *who* is doing the representing?

These questions reverberate with a loud, flat, embarrassing bang, their innocence utterly at odds with the sophistication of the various theories they subvert. Is the mind computational? It is. Does it proceed by an application of determinate rules? It does. Very well, consider this: at the conclusion of its computations, the mind bursts into a vivid, light-enraptured awareness of the world. I open my eyes and my eyes are filled. There is a panorama to which my eyes may be partial, but it is *my* eyes that are filled, my experiences possessing both an experiencing subject—me—and the contents of that experience, the scene and its surveyor bound inseparably together as fragments in a figure.

The persistence in theory of a certain embarrassing imbroglio—the mind suddenly opens an arena in which images are thoughtfully examined, or representations are mysteriously made to represent—is evidence of the enormous difficulty entailed in accommodating consciousness within any computational view of the mind's operations.

Although most analytic philosophers have remained materialists, it is consciousness that is now on everyone's lips. Employing an argument prematurely discarded by logicians, the distinguished mathematician Roger Penrose has concluded that consciousness *cannot* be computational: a reformation of quantum theory is required to set the matter right, the transmutation of thought into action

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taking place in the microtubules of the cell.* Elsewhere, unorthodox quantum physicists have argued for the ubiquity of mind throughout the cosmos, with even the atoms having a say in the scheme of things.† An enterprising academic, Colin McGinn, has concluded that the problem of consciousness must forever be insoluble and has made his discovery the foundation of a far-reaching philosophical system. A few philosophers have even been observed administering discreet kicks to the corpse of mind/body dualism: *get up, you fat fool, I need you.*

Do I have anything better? Of course not. "You could not discover the limits of soul," Heraclitus wrote, "not even if you traveled down every road. Such is the depth of its form."

IT IS a fact. Among the physicists, the old quiet confidence is gone. Men with black burning eyes roam the corridors of thought. They talk of theories that will explain absolutely everything and like barroom drunks fasten on anyone to unburden themselves: *It's strings, that's what it is, I'm telling you.* There are physicists (like Stephen Hawking or Paul Davies) convinced that they are shortly to know the Mind of God, or that they have seen in the firmament secrets of a cosmic code, or discovered in the dense inaccessible equations of general relativity living proof of the Christian resurrection.**

But even as physicists add to their great creation myths, questions follow assertions in a never-ending spiral. Why do the early galaxies show so much structure? How can the universe be younger than its oldest stars? Did space and time have a beginning? A *beginning?* A beginning *in* what? Are you saying that time is relative? Then what is that business about the first three minutes? Just what are *they* relative *to*? At the margins of speculation, strange numerical coincidences haunt the imagination. And there are singularities at the beginning and end of time, places where the laws of physics simply deform themselves and then collapse.

Mathematical physics, it is sometimes said, is the cathedral constructed by our culture. The image is apt. Messy, disorganized, ideologically confused but inescapably compelling, contemporary physics resembles nothing so much as one of those strange structures designed by Antoni Gaudí. There the spooky structure sits in the somber Spanish moonlight, bats flitting about the crenellated belfry, fantastic and odd, with its thousand-and-one idiosyncratic touches, its radically asymmetrical towers, quantum mechanics on the one side, general relativity on the other, its wealth of poorly understood details set amid fearfully difficult and rebarbative mathematics, portions of the great structure incomplete, the workmen having left their tools in stupefaction, the entire glorious edifice bearing in every way the marks of its many creators, the thing deeply moving, intensely human.

It has been the hope of the physical sciences that everything might be explained by an austere, impersonal, abstract, consistent, and complete set of mathematical laws. The hope has acquired the aspect of a faith. Within the closed coffin of academic science and analytic philosophy, things are as they always were; but no one who shares a delusion, as Freud memorably remarked, ever recognizes it as such. Elsewhere, confidence is leaking from the most profound and ambitious system of secular thought ever created. Everyone feels that this is so. And everyone is right.

The prevailing world of thought is like some frozen sea, heaving and cracking, with a trickle of shy life rushing beneath its surface, carrying fragrant memories of what has long been forgotten, a world beyond the world of matter. Human beings will always need to interpret themselves in ancient and familiar terms, the intentional circle enlarging but never breaking; for the way things are, they will never find an explanation so complete and so compelling as to make their transcendental urges irrelevant. Something is going and something is gone; some aspect of conviction has been broken. In return, there is something familiar and something recaptured. *For lo, the winter is past. The rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; The time of singing is come. And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.*

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* *The Emperor's New Mind* (Oxford, 1990) and *Shadows of the Mind* (Oxford, 1994). The first of these books was reviewed in COMMENTARY by Jeffrey Marsh (June 1990), the second by Adam Schulman (April 1995).

† Nick Herbert, *Elemental Mind* (Plume, 1994).

** See F. J. Tipler, *Physics and Immortality* (Doubleday, 1994). The generally favorable critical reception accorded this inadvertently hilarious book is itself a remarkable sign of divine grace.

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How to Save American Jews

Jack Wertheimer, Charles S. Liebman & Steven M. Cohen

OVER THE past ten years, the American Jewish community has undergone a radical inner shift in mood, from buoyant optimism to deep anxiety about its future. Indeed, it is now startling to recall that the most commented-upon Jewish book of 1985 was Charles Silberman's *A Certain People*, an upbeat account of "American Jews and their lives today" which found widespread evidence of "Jewish renewal" and security. If Silberman saw a danger looming on the American Jewish horizon, it came from "a new parochialism" that, he warned, was leading "many communal leaders to turn inward and focus exclusively on Jewish concerns."

Today, a mere decade later, the leadership of American Jewry is much more preoccupied with internal matters than it was in 1985, as it struggles to develop a strategy to hold the allegiance of those American Jews who remain within the fold and to win back the ever-increasing numbers on the margins.

The present anxiety can be dated to the findings gathered by the National Jewish Population Study (NJPS) of 1990. That study reported that among individuals born Jewish who married between 1985 and 1990, more than 50 percent were marrying Gentiles. The study also found that rates of affiliation with Jewish institutions other than synagogues and community centers were lower among younger Jews than among their elders, as were measures of identification with the state of Israel.

These findings jolted Jewish leaders sufficiently to prompt a far-reaching reexamination of the community's internal condition. Initially, most discussions focused on the apparently devastating data concerning intermarriage. "Will our grandchildren be Jewish?" was the troubling question posed at innumerable communal gatherings. Then, in a mood of somber stocktaking, leaders of Jewish federations convened a number of task forces to analyze and devise responses to what had become defined as a crisis of "Jewish continuity." The reports issued by these panels over the last few years reflect an emerging consensus on how best to cope with the challenges they describe. They also offer an opportunity to revisit the question of the exact nature of the threat facing the American Jewish community today, and to ask whether the treatment being prescribed is in fact appropriate to the illness.

A CAREFUL READER of the task-force reports will notice one striking feature: although they make regular ritual references to a "core" and a "periphery," they nevertheless tend to treat Amer-

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ican Jewry as a single unit, suffering its crisis of Jewish continuity in a more or less uniform manner. This leveling perspective is perhaps most glaring in the report of one such group, the CJF (Council of Jewish Federations) Task Force on the Intermarried, which asserts that "in reality they are us—our distant and most intimate family members, our neighbors, our friends, and our colleagues." The assumption, in brief, is that intermarriage is present in every Jewish family; that it appears at random; and that all sectors of the community are equally vulnerable.

Why are American Jewish leaders disposed to see an all-pervading crisis when, as they themselves tacitly concede, the data they are drawing upon suggest a number of subpopulations behaving in different ways? One answer derives from the constraints under which all such task forces operate. Drawing their own membership from the broad spectrum of Jews, they can reach agreement only by appealing to the lowest common denominator. Distinguishing between core Jews and peripheral ones would imply that some Jews behave in a fashion that is "better" than others. Such judgmentalism goes against the neutrality-seeking culture of the task forces' sponsoring institutions.

Indeed, the task forces are frank to admit that they proceeded with their work only after banning discussion about the most divisive—i.e., the most important—issues. For example, the report of the North American Commission on Jewish Identity and Continuity* states at the outset that its signers, some 85 Jewish leaders, "trie[d] to avoid imposing what are necessarily individual, albeit strongly held, views concerning the relative importance of what all agree are worthy principles and recommendations." Similarly, the Task Force on the Intermarried resolved from the start to remove many critical matters from the table and leave them for individual organizations to decide. Among such issues were "conversion and the impact that inclusion of the intermarried might have on Jewish institutions."

A SIMILAR DISINCLINATION to pass judgment informs the actual policy recommendations the task forces came up with. Thus, to "meet the needs of intermarried families," the Task Force on the Intermarried counsels the Jewish community first and foremost to ensure such families' "comfort." It urges

> top Federation leaders to meet with intermarried couples through dialogue and focus groups in order to learn their feelings and needs and to let them know the interest and concern of Federation. This approach would avoid making assumptions about what people need and want, but, instead, would allow learning about the needs of the intermarried directly. . . . This experience could be an important consciousness-raising step for Federation staff and lay leaders to increase their own sensitivity.

Notice that the moral burden here is not on the unaffiliated and the intermarried, who have "feelings and needs," but on the organized community and its institutions, which must show "interest and concern." Indeed, the degree to which Jewish institutions have been remiss in just this respect is a *leitmotif* of reports like that of the Commission on Jewish Identity and Continuity:

> Many observers have noted that in subtle and not-so-subtle ways Jewish institutions often send the message that they are a "private club" for those who meet certain criteria of commitment, life circumstances (e.g., being a family with two Jewish spouses and children), or ability to pay. If the community wishes to be taken seriously by those who may not meet these "entry requirements," it must actively seek to indicate to those not currently visibly connected to Jewish life that they are valued as Jews and that their needs and concerns are of importance to these institutions.

From premises like these it is but a small step to the conclusion that the real problem in the Jewish community is not the legions of the disaffiliated but the organizations which have driven them away. Here, for instance, is the editor of a major Jewish newspaper commenting on the way the community ostensibly treats its "fringe Jews":

> It only takes one punch to knock out countless Jews from Jewish life. They are the people who, in recent years, have scorned things Jewish. Then, one day, they have an urge to connect. They make the call, show up at an event or sign up for a program. Some even start getting involved. Then, boom! A rude receptionist, an insensitive letter, an unreturned telephone call, or just a lousy experience. They feel betrayed, or worse, become indifferent.

The same thinking is displayed by the Task Force on the Intermarried: "It may take only one negative experience, or what is perceived as a negative reaction, to discourage a couple showing interest and embitter their extended family."

If the organized community must refrain from

* This report has recently been released under the title, *To Renew and Sanctify*.

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criticizing intermarriage, and, for fear of offending, is forbidden even to convey the perception of a negative attitude, what must it do instead? In the words of the Commission on Jewish Identity and Continuity, it must "try to learn what [disaffiliated] individuals are seeking in and from their Jewishness, and to assist them in building their own Jewish frameworks for achieving these goals." In pursuit of this benignly therapeutic—and transcendentally vague—purpose, a veritable cottage industry has sprung up, mainly staffed by enterprising academics bent on "reinventing" Jewish organizational life. Their conclusions are unsurprising: American Jewry needs *more* institutions—new organizations that are "responsive," innovative programs of "outreach," additional types of synagogues, alternative rabbinical seminaries, as well as new forms of prayer, new conceptions of God, and, in some cases, new definitions of what it means to be a Jew. This is the bait that will, presumably, lure back the marginal, the disaffiliated, the no-longer Jewish.

Does it make sense for the organized Jewish community to rush to implement the course prescribed by its task forces and academic advisers? Is there a better way?

Common sense alone would suggest that American Jewry is not a homogeneous unit experiencing erosion uniformly; rather, the 5.8 million Jews who are scattered throughout the country constitute a heterogeneous population responding in diverse ways to the challenges and opportunities of contemporary life. The numbers who intermarry, for example, may have increased dramatically in specific sectors of the community but not in all. The overall figures of synagogue attendance may have declined among some groups of Jews but not in others. In some segments of the community there may be an increased *commitment* to Jewish norms and values.

In an effort to arrive at a more accurate picture of reality, we devised our own categories of Jewish involvement, using the 1990 NJPS data to identify the numbers and types of individuals in each. We began with those we named the "actively engaged," by which we meant to designate those Jews participating in any one of three types of activities: regular attendance at public worship, support of Jewish institutions, or observance of religious rituals at home. To qualify under the first of these criteria, an individual had to attend synagogue services twice a month or more; under the second, to participate in four of five civic activities (holding synagogue membership, joining a Jewish organization, contributing at least $500 to a Jewish charity, subscribing to at least one Jewish periodical, visiting Israel on at least two occasions); and under the third, to perform at least three of four home rituals (lighting Sabbath candles, purchasing kosher meat, using separate dishes for meat and dairy foods, celebrating four Jewish holidays). The groupings were not, of course, mutually exclusive. Our intention, rather, was to cast as wide a net as possible, in order to "catch" the population group that, when all is said and done, is most likely to determine the future of American Jewry.

Using the same measures, we then proceeded to classify the rest of the community. First we identified the "moderately engaged": those whose participation is more sporadic than that of the most involved but who still invest much time and energy in Jewish activities; then the "loosely engaged"; finally, the "disengaged."*

Categorizing American Jews according to levels of religious and communal participation brings into focus the true pattern of identification with and/or disaffiliation from Jewish life. Thus, we found that the actively engaged constitute 24 percent of American Jews and the moderately engaged 20 percent, while, between them, the loosely engaged and the disengaged make up 56 percent. As for intermarriage statistics, they run as follows: 4 percent among the actively engaged, 10 percent among the moderately engaged, 19 percent among the loosely engaged, and a whopping 49 percent among the disengaged—hardly a uniform or random distribution.†

Now, if the purpose is to ensure Jewish continuity for the next generation, it would seem clear that the place to begin is with the sectors of the community that are *already* engaged to a greater or lesser extent, enhancing the level of their commitment to Jewish life and increasing their overall size. After all, the two most engaged categories constitute, together, 44 percent of American Jews, and this is a percentage that *has not been declining by*

* The moderately engaged attend synagogue once a month or perform two home rituals or celebrate four holidays or participate in three types of communal affiliation. Loosely engaged Jews either attend synagogue only on the High Holidays or are affiliated in only two ways or celebrate only three holidays. The disengaged are at still lower levels of involvement.

† The NJPS, of course, registered a much higher figure overall (52 percent), but it was reporting on marriages in the narrow time frame of 1985-90; our figures measure the total number of married couples in the population in 1990.

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age. These are the core of the future community; surely they should be nurtured accordingly.

At the moment, however, they are not being so nurtured. To the contrary, many of the programs targeted at the uncommitted are virtually designed to undercut the Jewish values of the committed. Take, for example, a course of study jointly sponsored by a Hillel Foundation and a Jewish Family Services agency. Entitled "Interfaith Partnerships—Exploring and Negotiating Difference," the course advertises itself as ideal for intermarried couples "wanting to improve their relationship through exploration of each other's cultural history." But how, one wonders, does such "exploration" serve the interests of a Jewish community that wishes to *discourage* intermarriage? Would not that purpose be more effectively served by a program that conveyed a positive message about endogamy, and conveyed it to those with at least some minimal predisposition to hear it?

Basic to much of the so-called "outreach" effort aimed at interfaith couples is a tendency to denude Jewishness of its particularity. To be Jewish, such programs teach, requires only minimal changes in the values, identity, and primary-group ties of prospective members of the community. In their eagerness to ensure that non-Jews feel comfortable at religious services, for example, some Reform synagogues have rewritten the liturgy to strip away references to Jewish particularism. Thus, when a Gentile parent is called to the Torah on the occasion of a family celebration, all references to the chosenness of Israel are omitted.

Again, in trying to make potential converts feel comfortable, Jewish leaders have propagated the notion that *everyone* in the Jewish community who identifies with the group does so voluntarily and as the result of a subjective process of decision-making. "We are all 'Jews by choice'" goes a popular refrain, with the implication being, why don't you get in on the choosing, too? Yet such an approach drastically subverts the tribal nature of Jewish identity, and is anyway unlikely to work. Most people internalize their religious and group loyalties at an early age; by suggesting that Jews "choose" their identity, one is suggesting that being Jewish is not natural. Offensive as this is to the sensibilities of committed Jews, it is also hardly geared to win people over to a wholehearted identification with Judaism.

In short, moves designed to help Gentiles and marginal Jews feel "comfortable" also purvey the false and potentially destructive message that, in the interests of accommodation, the most deeply rooted Jewish beliefs can and readily will give way. Thus do well-meaning efforts to reach individuals on the margins not only wildly mislead about the nature of Judaism but drive an even greater wedge between such individuals and those in the core.

OUR OWN analysis points in a different direction. In our view, rather than heeding the call of its task forces, the organized Jewish community would do better to redirect its attention, its funding, and its programming from the periphery to the core; to turn to its most dependable members, whose participation it has taken for granted, and support *their* activities.*

For the truth is that engaged Jews cannot take care of their needs without significant institutional support. In the absence of such support, and while the attention of communal leaders has been riveted on the unaffiliated, they are struggling on their own. The key institutions requiring support are synagogues, day schools, summer camps, youth groups, campus programs, and religious and cultural institutions of higher learning—that is to say, institutions which emphasize Jewish particularism and foster strong identification with the group. These settings for natural and intense social interaction also teach the lesson that there is a distinctive Jewish world view, and that being Jewish means, to some degree, being different.

That difference is rooted, ultimately, in religion—a fact which leaders of the organized community, and especially of the secular policy-making agencies, have long sought to avoid addressing. To be sure, task-force reports are sprinkled with terms drawn from traditional religious vocabulary. They refer, for example, to *mitzvot* (commandments); but at the same time they conspicuously shy away from speaking of Judaism as a religion of laws, obligations, and *norms*. They speak about the imperative of Jewish survival; but no reason is given to explain why such survival is important, or how and by what means it can be effected. They pay lip service to the desirability of Jewish knowledge; but no attention is devoted to defining the content or purpose of such knowledge. Reading the task-force reports, one receives an impression of Judaism itself as a somewhat bitter-tasting and unpleasant medicine, a dose of which an ailing community must perhaps swallow; one receives little or no sense of the inherent value of its religious teachings.

* The Jewish Communal Affairs Department of the American Jewish Committee, under its director Steven Bayme, has in fact embraced the sorts of strategies we advocate here.

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There is no doubt a reason for this, arising from the reluctance of many in the organized community to acknowledge what the current crisis, if it is to be confronted fully, may demand of them. The report of the Commission on Jewish Identity and Continuity, for example, is honest enough to name "the forces of modernization and the attractiveness of a welcoming host society" as agents that "can combine to weaken the fabric of Jewish life, to dissipate the intensity of Jewish identity, and to loosen the bonds of Jewish community." Yet the report is simply incapable of contemplating what follows logically from its sober assessment: namely, that in order to combat these "forces," the Jewish community may have to adopt a view of Jewish identity as being at least partly in tension with the values of liberal, universalist modernity, and that any effort to strengthen "the fabric of Jewish life" may necessarily entail challenging if not rejecting aspects of that very ethos, an ethos with which both secular Jewish leaders and many religious ones as well have been prominently allied.

Significantly, among those we identified as the most engaged Jews, large numbers have made up their minds on this selfsame issue. For them, religious participation, even if it marks them out as "different" from their fellow Americans, is central to Jewish involvement. Although only 7 percent of American Jews overall identify themselves as Orthodox (according to the NJPS), among those we identified as the actively engaged, roughly 25 percent are Orthodox, with another 50 percent Conservative, and the remaining 25 percent Reform.

Such data do not prove that one "version" of Judaism is more correct and authentic than another; they do suggest that religious commitment is the strongest predictor of every other form of Jewish engagement. With some exceptions, moreover, those most actively engaged in Jewish life have consciously or unconsciously adopted a critical stance toward a number of the central values of modern culture, including its preference for individual autonomy at the expense of communal responsibility and its celebration of choice over obligation, especially obligation imposed from without.

But here is the final irony. For Jews on the margins who may be surfeited with rootlessness and looking for something authentic in their lives, the existence of an enthusiastic and fulfilled core population, a population offering a *genuine* alternative, can surely act as a more powerful lure than the bland nostrums of an establishment that offers, in effect, only another version of what already ails them. Such a core population exists—and with careful nurturing it can become even more highly engaged and much more numerous than it already is. For that to happen, however, the organized community will need to redirect its sights, and redefine what it means by Jewish continuity.

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OBSERVATIONS

Colin Powell & the Conservatives

David Frum

GENERAL COLIN POWELL ran his presidential campaign exactly as he would have liked to run the Gulf war: a massive build-up of force culminating in a strategic withdrawal. He left stranded behind him what remains of America's centrist establishment—which had invested in the general the hopes so bitterly disappointed by President Clinton—and an assortment of conservatives who, breaking ranks with their fellows, had declared qualified backing for him.

The centrists' enthusiasm for Powell needs no explanation. For them, he was perfect: conservative in tone, liberal in content; a complete creature of Washington; a man who saw the world precisely the way they did. But why conservatives should have backed Powell is more of a mystery.

Some of Powell's conservative sympathizers argued from tactics: neither Bob Dole nor Phil Gramm, they reasoned, is likely to succeed in defeating President Clinton in 1996; Colin Powell can; therefore, let us overcome our mistrust of him, secure in the knowledge that no matter who will be in the White House, a conservative Congress led by Newt Gingrich will do the real work of governing the nation. Other conservatives, conceding the harm that a President Powell might do to the conservative cause, declared their support for him anyway, on the grounds that his election would salve America's festering racial troubles. As Charles Krauthammer wrote in October, "For such a man to win the presidency would have a transforming effect on Americans' view of racial possibilities."

Both lines of reasoning were open to question. If Republicans were really thinking of governing from Capitol Hill after 1996, would they not be better off facing a moderate-to-liberal White House under the leadership of a vacillating and unpopular Bill Clinton than a moderate-to-liberal White House under the leadership of a strong and hugely popular Colin Powell? Worse, as a nominal Republican, a President Powell would command vastly more deference from the Republican congressional leadership than President Clinton.

As for the argument from racial harmony, its premises seemed equally dubious. Powell's exploration of a presidential run ignited curiously little enthusiasm among black Americans. Perhaps that is because the message conveyed by his career—that blacks who play by the rules can succeed in America—is hardly news. Business leaders, police chiefs, clergymen, university presidents, Supreme Court Justices, and politicians by the dozens have repeatedly demonstrated this truth, without palliating the country's racial conflicts in the slightest.

IF THE reasons given were unconvincing, what made the conservatives' flirtation with Powell all the more puzzling was that their candidate was no Cincinnatus. Had Colin Powell been elected President of the United States, his victory would have lifted out of the margins of American history a long-despised minority group: staff officers. Every previous general to win the White House has

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led American troops to victory in combat. Not General Powell; he served two stints in Vietnam, once as an adviser to South Vietnamese troops and then seven years later as a planning officer. The remainder of his 35-year military career was spent behind a desk.

There is nothing wrong with that, of course. The generals who plan operations are every bit as indispensable to military success as the George Pattons and Creighton Abramses. Good staff work can do what the brave but stupid William Westmoreland never did: win wars. Even so, desk generals—no matter how capable—have seldom excited much public enthusiasm. It was Ulysses S. Grant rather than Henry Halleck who swept into office in 1868; Dwight Eisenhower, not George C. Marshall, who galvanized the country in 1952.

Powell's boosters lauded his dignity and integrity—qualities inextricable from his character as a military man—and it is certainly true that he exudes a manliness and self-restraint strikingly anachronistic in an age of hucksterism. His best-selling autobiography, moreover, tells a remarkable story.* Powell personally transcended racial divisions in his beloved U.S. Army, and rose to the top by helping it to overcome those same divisions as an institution. When he reached the chairmanship of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he demonstrated in the most spectacular way that he owed his position to outstanding personal merit by bringing the nation its first unequivocal battlefield triumph since 1945.

Yet this argument from character also fails as a justification of Powell's candidacy, for it severs the character of the man from his actions—and also from the record of his career. It is a curious fact about Powell's account of himself that he seems far more eager to escape than to claim responsibility for his military actions.

At times, this habit seems no more than a defensive verbal tic, as if to ward off an accusation that no one has leveled against him. At other times, something more complicated seems to be going on. Thus, during the investigation of the My Lai massacre perpetrated by the division to which Powell was assigned as planning officer in 1969:

> He [the investigator] then asked me if I was custodian of the division's operational journals, and I said I was. He asked me to produce the journal for March 1968. I explained that I had not been with the division at that time.

At the botched invasion of Grenada in 1983:

> Relations between the services were marred by poor communications, fractured command and control, interservice parochialism, and micromanagement from Washington. . . . I was only a fly on the wall at the time. . . .

When the Clinton administration decided not to send the tanks to Somalia that would have protected the eighteen soldiers killed in Mogadishu in September 1993:

> With only three days left in my term, I was in [Secretary of Defense] Les Aspin's office making one last pitch to him to give [General] Tom Montgomery the armor he wanted. "It ain't gonna happen," Aspin, the political realist, said. . . . I had done what I had to do, a soldier backing soldiers.

Artful silences like these undergirded Powell's military career. They culminated in the much graver and more consequential moment when, as chairman of the Joint Chiefs, he first counseled against military action in the Gulf and then, after victory in the field was secured, abjured the opportunity to see the fighting through to its conclusion and thus left Saddam Hussein still in power in Iraq.†

Similar duckings have also formed the basis of Powell's (so far) abortive political career. At nearly sixty years of age, and after a decade and a half of service at the very center of America's political system, it did not embarrass him to claim that he was only beginning to evolve a political philosophy. The same man who tells us in *My American Journey* that he was neither for nor against sanctions on Saddam Hussein was now neither for nor against school prayer, neither for nor against abortion, neither for nor against gun control, neither for nor against affirmative action.

THE CASE for Powell as presidential candidate was that he was a leader; but where did he want to go? Perhaps he himself did not know. Perhaps, as cautious in politics as he was in war, he intended to wait for signals from others. Had he not declined to run, the only way to find out would have been to elect him President first.

This "trust-me" style of leadership obviously appeals to some deep yearning in American voters at large. The past two decades of highly charged politics have demanded from ordinary citizens uncomfortable amounts of effort, attention, and tolerance for conflict. And so one heard, in the fervent declarations of faith in Powell from the men and women who lined up to have him sign their books, a very understandable desperation to escape the clamor and din of contemporary politics. They seemed to be saying: stop forcing on us these harsh alternatives—banning or funding abortion; cutting or increasing welfare budgets; racial quotas or strict formal equality. Find some sensible middle course that will appeal to everyone, that will unite Americans as (in memory) they were united a generation ago.

*_My American Journey_, with Joseph E. Persico. Random House, 643 pp., $25.95.

†See "Colin Powell's War" by Donald Kagan in the June 1995 COMMENTARY.

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The last time around, the candidate who attempted to exploit this sentiment was Ross Perot. Needless to say, Colin Powell is a vastly more admirable man than the opportunistic and sinister Perot. But the appeal itself is based on an illusion—that someone, somehow, can unite all of America's contending factions into one post-ideological synthesis—and on a disturbing wish to be relieved of responsibility for the choices the country needs to make.

WHICH BRINGS us back to the conservatives. What made their deferential treatment of Powell all the more striking is that it occurred barely months after Newt Gingrich had demonstrated the extraordinary potential of an entirely different style of politics. The most remarkable thing about the Contract With America—far more remarkable than its contents—is the respect it accords to the electorate: "Here is what we propose to do if entrusted with power. Do you approve or disapprove?" More so than in any congressional election since 1980, or perhaps even since 1946, the voters of 1994 knew in advance what their decision at the ballot box would mean. Quite unlike their opponents—who campaigned on the theme, "trust us to do what's best for you"—the Republicans were seeking a mandate for a program, spelled out in advance.

Yet no more than anyone else, it seems, are conservatives immune to the blandishments of irresponsibility. Indeed, there is a historical pattern at work here: after a conservative electoral victory, it usually does not take very long before the nerve of some conservative leaders fails. It happened after 1968, with the dramatic expansion of the welfare state—and of affirmative action—under a Republican President; it happened again after 1980, when the Reagan administration shrank from carrying out its mandate to cut the size of government; and the Powell boomlet was an early sign that it might be happening a third time after 1994.

As they survey the arduous legislative program to which the Republican party has committed itself, some conservatives feel their stomachs flutter. Instead of hacking at the federal government, upsetting old people, and taking risks with the party's popularity, why not (they ask) make it a top priority to elect a Republican President who personifies the right sort of *values*? This is the miasma into which the Bush administration sank.

In particular, there hovers about some conservatives the desire that national politics be not about governing ("mere budget-balancing") but about teaching. In this view, not policies but values matter most, and what voters should seek in a President is not executive effectiveness but personal virtue. Up to a point, there *is* much to be said for this: moral leadership is a crucial part of democratic politics. Ronald Reagan's optimism and charm did as much to redirect America as his tax cut and military rearmament, and contemporary conservatives will not succeed in their aim of shrinking a bloated government if the only arguments they can muster involve the gross national product and the inflation rate.

But a partial truth is not the whole truth. Politics is not religion, and values cannot be separated from policies. A President who makes speeches about the need for families to remain together while tolerating a tax structure that drives the mothers of young children into the workforce does not deserve to be called "pro-family"—at least, one would think, not by conservatives. A President who celebrates persistence and entrepreneurship while resisting cutbacks in government expenditures that lure poor people into dependency and that tempt corporations to substitute lobbying for research and development should not be praised by conservatives as "pro-work." And a President who calls for racial reconciliation and the recognition of individual worth while defending America's system of legal and administrative racial preferences should not, among conservatives, gain a reputation for color-blindness.

Would Powell have been such a two-sided President? It is of course difficult to say for sure; but there is reason to think so. In a thirteen-page epilogue attached to the end of his memoir, he offers up a breezy analysis of contemporary politics curiously similar to that of Clinton pollster Stanley Greenberg in his new book, *Middle-Class Dreams*. Powell suggests that American voters

> are looking . . . not so much for a different party, but for a different spirit in the land, something better. How do we find our way again? How do we re-establish moral standards? How do we end the ethnic fragmentation that is making us an increasingly hyphenated people?

To these good questions, he then offers the following answer:

> We have to start thinking of America as a family. We have to stop screeching at each other, stop hurting each other, and instead start caring for, sacrificing for, and sharing with each other.

These are undigested clichés, of course, and hence not to be taken altogether seriously. Still, they are clichés with a certain provenance, whose shorthand name is the politics of meaning, the very politics to which Hillary Clinton once gave her blessing.

Now suppose, by contrast, that Powell had written something else:

> We have to start thinking of America as a team. We have to stop blaming each other, stop labeling each other, and instead

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start doing our best, carrying our own load, taking responsibility for ourselves.

This second set of sentences is as full of clichés as the first, but it conveys a very different message: to be brief about it, a conservative one.

Since the collapse of public support for liberalism beginning in the late 1960's, the once-dynamic ideology of Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson has survived mostly by indirection and evasion; by saying one thing at the hustings and doing another in the corridors of Congress; and by relying on a complicit press to describe liberals (of either party) as "pragmatic" or "centrist," and conservatives (of either party) as "ideological" or "extreme." The Powell quasi-candidacy raised these methods of evasion to a new level.

Ironically enough, the Powell boomlet peaked at almost exactly the same moment as the House Republicans' bold decision to reform the Medicare program. For those conservatives who participated in the boomlet, the juxtaposition should have served as a stark reminder of the task they were sent to Washington to accomplish, and from which General Powell, by declining to run for President, has not released them.

Music

Record Blues

Terry Teachout

If a music lover of 1966 were to awake one morning and find himself transported, Rip Van Winkle-like, to the classical department of a present-day record store, what would surprise him most?

The most striking change would of course be the near-complete replacement of vinyl long-playing records by compact discs, which 30 years ago did not exist even in the imaginations of engineers. Extraordinary, too, is the sheer range of music available today. The complete symphonies of Haydn, the complete operas of Verdi, the complete songs of Schubert—all have been recorded for the first time since 1966, and are now readily available on CD, together with an astonishingly wide range of nonstandard repertory.

Almost as striking is the new look of today's classical recordings. The sober jackets of three decades ago have given way to pop-style covers, featuring everything from sexually suggestive photographs to romantic-sounding, marginally relevant titles like *Love's Twilight* (for a recital of turn-of-the-century German lieder) or *Voices of Ascension* (for a collection of Renaissance choral music).

A time traveler from the 60's would no doubt also note the large number of "crossover" albums, on which classical musicians perform pop music. In 1966, crossover meant Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops, and not much else; nowadays, it can mean anything from *I Wish It So* (Elektra Nonesuch 7559-79345-2), an album of Broadway show tunes tastefully and imaginatively sung by the soprano Dawn Upshaw, to such masscult monstrosities as Vanessa-Mae's *The Violin Player* (Angel CDC 55089), a top-selling CD succinctly described by one West Coast journalist as "a disc which covers styles from Beethoven to Beatles, Mozart to Michael Jackson, Paganini to Prince."

But the most far-reaching change in recorded classical music would not necessarily be apparent at first glance. In 1966, record companies still operated according

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to principles dating back to the beginning of the 20th century—just as the larger culture of classical music, despite the fragmenting effects of modernity, was also still broadly similar to its 19th-century counterpart. But that culture has been substantially transformed in the course of the last quarter-century, and as a result the major classical labels, not surprisingly, are undergoing a severe crisis of artistic confidence.

WALTER LEGGE, the greatest record producer of the LP era, once said that companies in the 20's and 30's sought "to get the best artists into the studio and get onto wax the best sound pictures of what those artists habitually did in public." What this meant in practice was that producers took the existing classical-music culture as a given, seeking less to influence it than to document it, just as it was. Unknown young musicians did not normally find their way into studios, there to record unfinished interpretations of unpopular scores; instead, established artists were hired to record familiar masterpieces they had performed in public hundreds of times.

This approach, modified only slightly, dominated the classical-record business into the 70's. The major labels all operated on the principle that the best way to make money was to record prominent names in standard repertory. To that end, they signed exclusive contracts with the biggest artists they could find. Promotional budgets were modest, marketing strategies rudimentary.

Obviously, the effectiveness of the big-name approach depended on the drawing power of musical celebrities. In the 60's, the stars of classical music continued to shine brightly, and record companies basked in their glow. RCA had the aging but still-glamorous prewar émigrés—the violinist Jascha Heifetz, the pianist Arthur Rubinstein, the cellist Gregor Piatigorsky—plus the pianist Van Cliburn and the soprano Leontyne Price, two American artists who at one time rivaled their foreign-born counterparts in domestic renown. Columbia had the virtuoso conductors—Leonard Bernstein, Eugene Ormandy, George Szell—plus the pianists Vladimir Horowitz and Glenn Gould and the violinist Isaac Stern. In Europe, Deutsche Grammophon (DGG) recorded the top German artists—meaning, above all, the conductor Herbert von Karajan and the baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau—and EMI recorded almost everyone else—meaning, above all, the opera stars Maria Callas and Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, and the conductor Otto Klemperer.

Yet changes were under way even then, and ironically enough, the mass-reproduced phonograph record was the source of some of them. Thus, it was Enrico Caruso's records, which he first started making in 1902 when he was already a successful singer, that persuaded the Metropolitan Opera to hire him the following year, and that subsequently brought him to the attention of an international audience, including hundreds of thousands of people who never heard him sing in person. Had Caruso been born before the invention of the phonograph, he might well have remained a regional celebrity.

THROUGHOUT THE next half-century, recordings became steadily more central to the careers of the artists who made them. This was not true in all cases, to be sure. Van Cliburn, for example, did not begin recording until after he won the Tchaikowsky Competition in 1958, an event that put him on the front pages of newspapers around the world—and without which RCA would never have considered signing him to a contract. Yet by and large the model for the future was not Cliburn but Glenn Gould, whose initial claim to fame was his best-selling 1955 Columbia recording of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, which catapulted him to a stardom that proved even more lasting than Cliburn's.

Gould's success was an omen of things to come. Beginning in the 60's, record companies started in earnest to sign promising young musicians: most notably, the violinists Itzhak Perlman and Pinchas Zukerman, the cellist Jacqueline du Pré, the conductor Zubin Mehta, and Vladimir Ashkenazy and Daniel Barenboim, both of whom launched their careers as pianists but now devote most of their time to conducting. The members of this much-ballyhooed circle, informally (and indiscriminately) known in the music business as the "Jewish mafia," all began to record in their twenties or earlier, before their artistic personalities were fully formed. No matter: they soon became famous, as much for their records as for their live performances.

But the rise of the "Jewish mafia" also coincided with the beginning of the end of the star system itself, the very basis of the classical-record industry. Except for Isaac Stern, the biggest names of the 60's are now mostly dead or retired, and they have not been replaced—a fact dramatized by the constant reissuing of their recordings on compact disc.[1] At present, the sole classical-music superstar is the tenor Luciano Pavarotti, who is sixty years old and nearing the end of his performing career. Although the members of the "Jewish mafia" are still active (except for du Pré, whose career was cut short in 1973 due to illness), they have mostly lost their hold on the imaginations of serious listeners. Several other artists who made

[1]In the last five years alone, BMG and Sony have reissued on CD (or are currently in the process of reissuing) the complete recordings of Leonard Bernstein, Van Cliburn, Glenn Gould, Jascha Heifetz, Vladimir Horowitz, Isaac Stern, Arturo Toscanini, and Bruno Walter.

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their debuts in the 60's and 70's have had major careers, but none has achieved the kind of lasting international celebrity that was far from unusual in the day of Heifetz and Horowitz.

Some labels are trying to keep the traditional star system alive by "creating" stars of their own. Perhaps the *locus classicus* of this approach is the marketing by Decca/London of the Italian mezzo-soprano Cecilia Bartoli. Born in 1966, Bartoli has had a very limited operatic career to date (she will make her Metropolitan Opera debut next month, six years after her first American concert appearances). But she has nonetheless achieved something approaching superstar status since the release in 1989 of her first album, in part because of her genuine musical gifts and engaging personality but also because Decca/London has poured large amounts of money into promoting her recordings; these are festooned with carefully posed glamor-girl photos, some of them bordering on cheesecake.

For every Cecilia Bartoli, however, there are a dozen or more singers, instrumentalists, and conductors who have received a variation of the media-blitz treatment, to no avail. And while it remains possible that a new crop of classical stars will miraculously appear on the scene between now and century's end, many record executives privately acknowledge that the old days of big names and standard repertory are at an end.

THE COLLAPSE of the star system has inevitably had a dampening effect on the industry that for so long depended on it. Though more people are buying records than ever before, classical music continues to appeal to the same minuscule percentage of listeners it has always had—somewhere between 3 and 4 percent in any given year, according to the Recording Industry Association of America. Twice as many rap records as classical were bought in 1994, and nine times as many rock records.

Such numbers were considered less important 30 years ago, when managers took a longer view of the process of moneymaking. Walter Legge said in 1977 that he had sought to make records "which would sell . . . for 20 or 30 years or more"; and indeed, most of the records Legge produced for EMI in the 50's have since been transferred to CD, and continue to sell briskly to this day. But the corporate structure of the record industry has itself undergone convulsive change since Legge's retirement in 1964. Three of the four major European labels—DGG, Decca/London, and Philips—were fused into a single corporate entity named Polygram. RCA was bought by BMG, a German conglomerate; and Columbia was bought by Sony, a Japanese conglomerate.

A classical label which is but one small division of a huge multinational corporation soon finds itself under pressure to maximize profits, preferably by the fastest means possible. Hence crossover albums and pop-style concoctions like—at best—*The Three Tenors*, a 1990 live recording by Pavarotti, Placido Domingo, and José Carreras, or—at worst—*So Many Stars* (Sony SK 68473), an appallingly limp pop album released last year by the soprano Kathleen Battle. Artistically, however, the major labels are at a loss, a conclusion that is only fortified by a closer look at the new releases of 1995.

Of the six major companies, BMG, once the home of Rubinstein and Arturo Toscanini, has not successfully launched an important instrumentalist in recent memory, and 1995 was no exception. Sony, once the home of Horowitz and Bruno Walter, devoted most of its new-release schedule in 1995 to Russian music performed by obscure Russian artists and pre-Romantic music performed on period instruments by obscure European artists (both of which can be recorded cheaply). EMI, Decca/London, and Philips released comparatively few recordings of interest in 1995. And while DGG continues to do first-rate work, it has yet to emerge fully from the extended period of drift that followed the deaths in 1989 and 1990 of its two biggest moneymakers, Karajan and Bernstein.

In fact, indisputably major *conductors* under the age of sixty are currently the scarcest commodity all across the classical-music field, and will probably remain so for some time to come. The only ones who come readily to mind are Valery Gergiev, whose appearances with the Metropolitan Opera in 1995 electrified New York audiences, and Michael Tilson Thomas, whose oddly uneven career took a sharp upward turn last fall when he became music director of the San Francisco Symphony and signed a contract with BMG. This scarcity has had its effect on the record industry: no truly memorable sets of complete operas were released last year, and distinguished (as opposed to competent) renderings of the symphonic repertory were few and far between.

Still, even a gloomy picture is not all shadow, and the record industry, too, is not without its areas of light. A number of *singers* who divide their energies more or less evenly between the opera stage and the concert hall have lately won international prominence; these singers, though none has as yet achieved superstar prominence, are making the most interesting recordings of the 90's. They include the sopranos Dawn Upshaw and Barbara Bonney, the mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter, the contralto Nathalie Stutzmann, the baritones Thomas Hampson and Dmitri Hvorostovsky, and the bass-baritones Bryn Terfel and Sergei Leiferkus. Their commitment to the song recital, thought by most critics to be a dying art form only a few years ago, may have a galvanizing effect on

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concertgoers (and record buyers) in the first decade of the 21st century.[2]

A handful of outstanding young *instrumentalists* has also emerged since the 80's, including the pianist Evgeny Kissin—an ex-prodigy from Russia widely regarded as the finest pianist of his generation—and the violinists Gil Shaham and Maria Bachmann, all of whom brought out excellent recordings in 1995.[3] Unfortunately the major labels, perhaps because of the priority now placed on TV exposure, seem more interested in cultivating such self-consciously eccentric players as the violinist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg and the pianist Ivo Pogorelich, or such highly publicized child prodigies as the violinists Midori and Sarah Chang. This approach *can* work, under ideal circumstances—Kissin, who made his first recordings at the age of twelve, is a spectacularly successful example—but more typical is the unhappy case of Midori, whose lifeless recordings for Sony show what can happen to a prodigy who receives too much press too soon.

AS A rule, the record labels that have maintained distinctive artistic identities in the 90's are small, independent companies like Chandos and Hyperion, or "imprints" like Nonesuch (a division of Elektra), which in 1992 put out the phenomenally successful recording of the Third Symphony of the Polish composer Henryk Górecki. Significantly, Nonesuch, Hyperion, Chandos, and other such "postmodern" niche labels have thrived not by signing established stars but by recording unusual repertory, including much 20th-century music.[4] No less significant are those niche labels—Pearl, Biddulph, Romophone, and Dutton Laboratories in particular—that specialize in the systematic reissue of 78-era performances by great artists of the past.

The artistic vitality of the niche labels has not been lost on their larger competitors. Since the success of the Górecki Third Symphony, for instance, all of them have moved in on minimalism in general and in particular on such "holy-minimalist" composers as Górecki, Arvo Pärt and John Tavener.[5] Sony's decision, noted above, to devote a substantial part of its 1995 release schedule to period-instrument performances is another example of this same effort to shift focus.

But whether the big companies will really be capable either of executing or of sustaining such a shift remains problematic. One promising attempt—Catalyst, a BMG "imprint" devoted to new music—came to grief earlier this year when, tellingly, its founder and chief producer was forced out in a corporate power struggle. It seems more likely that the major labels will opt instead for short-term strategies, including the reissue on CD of notable recordings of the LP era—BMG's "RCA Living Stereo" and Polygram's "Mercury Living Presence" series, both aimed at audiophiles nostalgic for the high-quality analogue sound of the early days of stereo, are among the few artistically satisfying major-label success stories of recent years—and the continued production of crossover albums.

THE GROWTH of niche labels parallels similar developments in the world of book publishing, where serious books are left to smaller houses or to imprints, while the established firms, most of which have been absorbed by larger corporations, concentrate on mass-market titles.

As it happens, though, both kinds of publishing have reached a technological crossroads. Direct electronic transmission to consumers of both books and recorded music will become feasible sometime early in the 21st century. When this occurs, the record business will undergo a further and far more drastic metamorphosis, about which the only thing sure is that it will be subject to the law of unintended consequences.

The "end of history," in other words, may be near for the recording industry, classical and otherwise. Until that time, it seems likely that the major labels will continue to search in vain for the certainty of artistic direction that record buyers took for granted in 1966.

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[2]The most recent solo album released in this country by von Otter, to my mind the foremost classical singer of our time, is a recording of Hugo Wolf's *Spanish Songbook*, in which the Swedish mezzo is joined by baritone Olaf Bar and pianist Geoffrey Parsons (EMI ZDCB 55325). Von Otter and Bonney both take part in a performance of Brahms's *Liebeslieder-Walzer* (Op. 52) and *Neue Liebeslieder-Walzer* (Op. 65), recorded live at the 1994 Edinburgh Festival (EMI CDC 55430). Terfel can be heard in *The Vagabond*, a program of English art songs (DGG 445 946-2GH). Leiferkus released two recital albums in 1995: a collection of songs by Rachmaninoff (Chandos CHAN 9374) and the first in a series of albums devoted to the complete songs of Mussorgsky (Conifer/BMG 75605-51229-2).

[3]Kissin's latest album couples sonatas by Haydn and Schubert (Sony SK 64538). *Kiss on Wood* is a recital of 20th-century music for violin and piano performed by Bachmann and the pianist Jon Klibonoff, her regular recital partner (Catalyst/BMG 09026-62668-2). Shaham has recorded Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and Kreisler's C Major Concerto "in the style of Vivaldi," accompanied by the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra (DGG 439 933-2GH).

[4]The repertory-driven approach of Hyperion, the most consistently imaginative record label in Europe, is illustrated by two representative 1995 releases, a collection of vocal and instrumental music by the English composer-conductor Constant Lambert (Hyperion CDA66754) and *Over Hill, Over Dale*, a program of unaccompanied choral music by Ralph Vaughan Williams, the latter performed by Stephen Layton and the Holst Singers (Hyperion CDA66777).

[5]This phenomenon is discussed at greater length in my article, "Holy Minimalism," COMMENTARY, April 1995.

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Books in Review

Up With Feelings

Emotional Intelligence
by Daniel Goleman
Bantam Books. 352 pp. $23.95

Reviewed by
Joseph Adelson

DANIEL GOLEMAN writes on behavioral science for the *New York Times*, reporting on research that has appeared in the psychological literature. That is no easy task: each month several thousand studies appear, and at the *Times* Goleman must choose those which are of general interest and report their contents accurately without drowning the reader in technical trivia.

This book, now high on the best-seller lists, treats the emotional life in its many vicissitudes. It is at its best when Goleman sticks to his last, functioning as a journalist. Some of the findings he discusses are of considerable importance, and still not widely known.

Thus, we may be aware that our emotions play an important role in our health, but the effects reported here are surely more powerful than most of us have imagined. For example: being optimistic is remarkably good for what ails you; pessimists, and those given to depression, are at a real disadvantage when it comes to surviving certain serious illnesses, especially heart conditions. In one study reported by Goleman, 21 of 25 pessimistic men were dead eight years after a first heart attack, while among 25 optimistic men, only six succumbed in the same period. The debilitating effects of pessimism and depression can be seen elsewhere as well, e.g., in rates of recovery from hip fracture among the elderly, and in those receiving bone-marrow transplants or dialysis for chronic kidney failure.

Anger is another emotional state which increases the chances of early mortality. In a long-range study of physicians first tested while in medical school and later in middle age, those scoring high on hostility were seven times more likely to have died by the age of fifty than those who scored low. Similar findings apply even to minor illnesses. Those with a high degree of stress in their lives are about twice as likely as others to come down with a cold following exposure to a cold virus.

THIS IS interesting information, and one wishes the book were limited to it. Alas, Goleman has a *thesis*, and perhaps even a *mission*: our emotions, he argues at great length, have a determining effect on our worldly success—at least as much as, and perhaps more than, IQ. Just as there is cognitive intelligence, so there is "emotional intelligence," made up of such traits as self-awareness, empathy, social competence, cheerfulness, poise, responsibility, impulse control, and so forth. In fact, according to

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Goleman, individuals possessing these qualities do better in life than the nerds—that is, individuals who are smart, or even super-smart, but are otherwise lacking in personal virtues, being dull, socially clumsy, impulsive, irresponsible, cranky, mean-tempered, and so forth.

Unfortunately, Goleman has conjured up a dichotomy which bears almost no relation to the world as we know it—a dichotomy between, on the one hand, the gauche, gross geeks and, on the other hand, the saintly charmers. Not merely is the opposition between these two classes overdrawn to the point of caricature; worse still, it is fundamentally untrue. On the whole, those with high IQ's *are* the emotionally intelligent, and vice versa.

This was made evident many decades ago. Lewis Terman, a pioneering student of the intellectually gifted, showed in careful studies, conducted over a number of years, that high-IQ individuals are superior to others in all the ways Goleman deems laudable—in aesthetic sensitivity, in moral probity, in the social graces, and so on. These findings and many others like them are neither exceptional nor recondite. Why, then, does this book overlook them?

The reason is that, to put it mildly, IQ is very much out of favor these days. The scientific objections to it are to some degree legitimate: we still do not know for sure whether intelligence is a unitary trait, or one made up of different functions. But the more powerful resistance is ideological. The ghost that hovers over this book is last year's *The Bell Curve*, by Charles Murray and the late Richard J. Herrnstein. That is a work which stresses the power rather than the limitations of cognitive intelligence as a predictor of success in life, and the venomous reception which greeted it should be set against the enthusiastic welcome accorded to Goleman's book. True, unlike *The Bell Curve*, *Emotional Intelligence* reads easily, requires no intellectual stretching by the reader, and is laden with poignant and at times melodramatic examples. Above all, however, it confirms the national faith in self-improvement.

IQ is "hard," that is, relatively immutable. It is to a significant degree genetic, and once in place it cannot easily be raised or lowered. Those with high intelligence have a discernible advantage over others, and, what is worse, they have been born with that advantage. Although it is not a *decisive* advantage, being more like an edge, that in itself is enough to discomfit and even enrage the rabidly egalitarian among us. The standard textbooks in developmental psychology tend to treat IQ with suspicion, and especially to minimize its predictive potency.

Goleman does the same, but adds something new to the pot—namely, his concept of emotional intelligence. This capacity also promotes success, but, unlike cognitive intelligence, it is malleable. It can be raised. It can be trained—in fact, rather easily. A patient, or client, or student, or subject can learn to understand his emotions, and to alter them; can learn how to recognize the needs and fears of others, and to accommodate them. Indeed, the final chapter of *Emotional Intelligence* is devoted to just that theme. In it we are introduced to the Self-Science Curriculum, which, we are told, can enhance our "social development," "life skills," and the like. The reader is encouraged to try his hand at it himself.

I did try, hoping to overcome both my disdain for this book and my admiration for the intelligence of the author who crafted it. In the first of these aims, I cannot report much success.

Necropsy

The Strange Death of the Soviet Empire

by David Pryce-Jones

Holt. 456 pp. $30.00

Reviewed by
Arch Puddington

THE SOVIET empire did die a "strange death." As challenges to Moscow's hegemony rolled across Eastern Europe in 1989, many observers anticipated that the Kremlin would unleash a terrible wave of repression. "In the light of Marxism-Leninism and past Soviet practice," writes David Pryce-Jones, a foreign correspondent for many years for the *Daily Telegraph* of London and the author of several widely praised books on international affairs, "nothing else was to be expected." But in the end the USSR went quietly into the night. The great riddle Pryce-Jones attempts to solve here is: why?

One promising place to look for an answer is the recollections of participants. *The Strange Death of the Soviet Empire* offers precisely that: it is based on interviews with an impressively wide range of Soviet and East European political figures, including old-line apparatchiks, dissidents, reform Communists, independent-minded scholars, and military officers. These interviewees prove for the most part to be shrewd analysts, although they also frequently contradict one another, and the scent of self-interest

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is detectable in what they say. Nevertheless, Pryce-Jones succeeds in weaving together their words with his own probing analysis; the resulting composite portrait consistently deepens our understanding of one of the greatest and least bloody revolutions of modern times.

One theme that surfaces throughout this book is the loss of faith and fervor among Soviet and East European Communist-party elites. By the late 1980's, with the exception of a relatively small handful of aging party functionaries, even high-ranking Communists appear to have lost the commitment and will required to perpetuate their dictatorial form of rule. Some, particularly in Eastern Europe, were subverted by "*nomenklatura* capitalism," a form of activity which allowed party officials and their relatives to dabble in the underground economy and adopt its mores. Others gradually succumbed to the flow of information carried by an ever more diverse set of channels from the West, and began to see the contradictions and absurdities of "real existing socialism" for what they were.

Whatever the source of disaffection and disillusionment, few of the high-level officials interviewed by Pryce-Jones have good words for the system that bestowed upon them so much power and privilege when they dwelled at its top. Some are downright bitter. Aleksandr Tsipko, a Communist theoretician who went on to become one of the most trenchant critics of the Soviet regime, today wonders aloud whether

> history just performed an experiment on us, freezing our brains, thoughts, and feelings, compelling us to wander about the world asleep, committing a mass of idiocies, murdering one another, doing no end of atrocious things.

Others we encounter here, while not so ferociously self-lacerating, describe the Communist system in its final years as a hollow and decrepit shell.

Despite the growing sense of unease so apparent among Communists in the mid-1980's, no one in a position of leadership in Eastern Europe or the USSR comprehended that a sweeping crisis was about to descend and brush the Marxian order away. This applies even to the most vulnerable of them, Poland's General Wojciech Jaruzelski, who from the birth of Solidarity in 1980 had to contend with the organized resistance of the very proletariat in whose name he ruled. Despite this, Jaruzelski seems to have felt himself secure, believing he had neutralized dissident movements through the skillful application of police measures on a nationwide scale.

IRONICALLY, THE figure who more than anyone else helped obscure the perilous weaknesses of the Communist world from his East European satraps was Mikhail Gorbachev. It is fitting that the last General Secretary of the USSR occupies a central role in the necropsy Pryce-Jones has carried out.

When Gorbachev came to power in 1985, he was regarded in the East (and in many quarters of the West) as a man who might succeed in accomplishing a task at which his predecessors had failed: reinvigorating the Soviet state. Many younger Soviet and East European party members certainly believed this to be the case; appalled by the dogmatism of old-line leaders like East Germany's Erich Honecker and Bulgaria's Todor Zhivkov, they attempted to hitch themselves to Gorbachev's career.

But over the next five years these reform Communists, together with the rest of the world, discovered the folly of their misplaced confidence: the idea that Gorbachev could salvage Communism was an illusion. For one thing, he was not the man for the

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job. Even his closest supporters describe him in Pryce-Jones's book as vain, irresolute, and astonishingly inept for someone conditioned by the hard school of Soviet politics. Yet if Gorbachev had been a more gifted politician, he would have failed all the same. What "modernizing" Communism really required was uncooking an omelet and then reassembling the broken eggs—not a task for anyone.

Certainly the final years of Soviet history illustrate both Gorbachev's personal limitations and the formidable nature of the undertaking. In the economic realm, Gorbachev's initial impulses were, as Pryce-Jones's account reminds us, straight out of the time-tested-and-failed central-planning handbook: an attempt to shift resources from consumption to investment, an anti-alcohol campaign, a demand for labor discipline, and, with the slogan "acceleration," a call for harder, faster work. When these steps failed to spark the faltering economy, Gorbachev resorted to a series of ad-hoc measures, none of them part of a coherent plan for reform, none lasting long enough to judge its effects. Gorbachev's single and wholly unintended accomplishment in the economic arena was to destabilize the highly complex command economy without constructing a functioning market in its place.

Nor was the Soviet economy the single flaw in the social system Gorbachev was attempting to repair. There was the sensitive matter of what to do about the USSR's non-Slavic peoples, whose attachments to the empire, always tenuous, were coming under additional strain. Previous Soviet rulers had maintained social peace in the republics, especially those to the south, by tolerating widespread corruption among local elites. But as is made clear in *The Strange Death of the Soviet Empire*, Gorbachev, harboring considerable contempt for his semi-Asiatic subjects, attempted to end their rampant criminality once and for all. His strong-arm actions to accomplish this had only one result: upsetting the delicate equilibrium between the Soviet/Russian center and the various non-Russian groups on the empire's edge. By December 26, 1991, Gorbachev's last day in office, matters came to something of an unexpected head with the dissolution of the theoretically inseparable fraternity of Soviet socialist peoples.

Finally, there was Gorbachev's attempt to reform the ossified Communist political system itself. The primary instrument employed in this operation was glasnost. Gorbachev's encouragement of openness throughout society, and especially in the press, began in a very limited and tentative way; as is well-documented in Pryce-Jones's book, it was never conceived as anything more than a means of creating a constituency in the intellectual class that would back further cautious reform.

But even as glasnost failed to achieve that goal, it took on a brilliant career of its own, shattering one taboo after another and injecting genuine life into Soviet politics. Glasnost succeeded, in short, in undermining all of Communism's pretenses and claims—again, as Pryce-Jones shows, very far from what Gorbachev had in mind. To his own peril, he discovered late in the day that rationing freedom is a more difficult enterprise than rationing meat.

IF ANY single point emerges with clarity from the many fascinating tributaries and streams explored in *The Strange Death of the Soviet Empire*, it is the deep irony that attended the career of Mikhail Gorbachev. He was certainly right to recognize that the USSR had reached a dead end, and that change could not be postponed. But he proceeded to weaken precisely those elements which his critics, including the old-time apparatchiks in the East European satellites, correctly understood were the essential keys to Communist rule: namely, coercion and centralization. The East German regime thus had logic on its side when in 1988 it banned public mention of perestroika, Gorbachev's primary designation for his structural reform. For had not the East Germans assiduously labored for years to foster the image of Communism as an infallible system? Was this not the immovable rock on which their own branch of the church had been built? Once Gorbachev permitted people to speak frankly and freely, the foundation was dislodged and in short order the entire structure came tumbling down.

Wandering Jews

Assimilation and Its Discontents
by Barry Rubin
Times Books. 400 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
Jay M. Harris

While other peoples and nations took only from the new and foreign flow what was good for their existence, thereby preserving their individuality and uniqueness, the Jews suffered with the curse of appropriating all that was new and foreign like no others did, while repudiating all that was holiest and most authentic.

SO WROTE Pauline Wengeroff, a Russian Jewess, at the beginning of this century in her *Memoirs*

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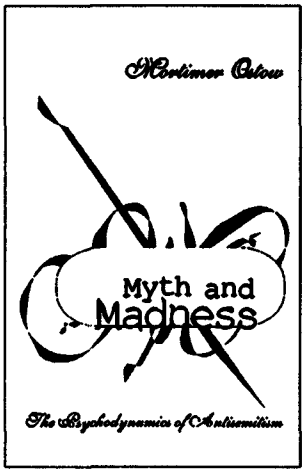
of a Grandmother. Her words, a reaction to the tendencies of a particular class of Jews in czarist Russia, could have been voiced by many a despairing Jewish mother and grandmother throughout Europe and the Americas. For, in the last two centuries, Jews in remarkable numbers have indeed partially or totally distanced themselves from Jewish religious and cultural traditions.

This distancing is only a part of what Wengeroff bemoans, however. The acts of alienation she recounts occurred against the backdrop of political changes throughout Europe and North America which allowed Jews to be, or to fantasize about becoming, equal members of a broader society. That is, Jews were attracted to the "foreign flow" because of the social, economic, and intellectual possibilities of modern life, beside which Jewish tradition seemed, to many, positively primitive.

The combination of partial or total alienation from Jewish tradition and attraction to new political or social identities is generally referred to as assimilation. Over the last two centuries, within different political or social frameworks, distinct patterns of the phenomenon have emerged. In this book, Barry Rubin, an American political scientist who has written previously about Arab-Israeli affairs and who now lives in Jerusalem, seeks not only to tell the story of Jewish assimilation but to "solve [its] enduring riddle."

Rubin proceeds by focusing almost exclusively on a number of rich and/or famous Jews who have striven to find a place in the societies they wished to enter and have thereby changed themselves and, in more than a few instances, their societies as well. A skillful storyteller, Rubin presents his case studies with wit and energy. We meet writers, businessmen, politicians, entertainers, intellectuals, and dreamers, all characterized by the desire—in some cases, the outright need—to divest themselves of any trace of Jewishness. Although the strategies they employ may vary, Rubin's assimilationists share a mixture of, on the one hand, creativity, drive, and ambition and, on the other hand, personal ambivalence and even self-hatred.

From these profiles and vignettes Rubin creates an assimilationist "type," perhaps best exemplified by the comic-book character of Superman (the creation, as it happens, of two Jews). Superman adopts a new society and pledges himself to sustain and preserve it. As long as he is in and of that society, he is invincible and invulnera-



MYTH AND MADNESS
THE PSYCHODYNAMICS OF ANTISEMITISM
Mortimer Ostow

The persistence of antisemitism and its current resurgence after a brief post-Holocaust suppression challenge those who study human behavior to locate the causal bases of antisemitism and find approaches to combat it. This is an astonishing report of a nine-year study of the psychodynamics of antisemitism, undertaken by Dr. Mortimer Ostow of the Psychoanalytic Research and Development Fund. This is a landmark effort—one that will be the touchstone for theoretical and clinical works to come.

"This is an important and necessary book for our times. Concentrating on a study of antisemitism and based on clinical observations and processes, this volume will also be a source book for how to study the unending torrents of racism without overlooking contributory historical, cultural, religious and mythical currents and whirlpools."
—Albert J. Solnit, M.D., Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services, Connecticut

"An endlessly fascinating work of psycho-history that contextualizes the genesis of antisemitism in the nexus between individual needs and cultural constructs. Professor Ostow has masterfully distilled his extraordinary collaboration with colleagues over many years into a benchmark of interdisciplinary scholarship. The result illuminates not only the age-old dynamics of antisemitism but also the shocking resurgence of ethnic hatred since the end of the cold war."
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ble; the only thing that can hurt him is contact with his home world and culture. Translation: to the assimilating Jew, Jewishness is kryptonite.

It is this allergy to their own Jewishness that explains, for Rubin, why assimilationists may be found in the forefront of those opposing the "parochial," and are often even involved in causes inimical to the interests of their fellow Jews.

Sometimes their activities in this connection are undertaken in the name of a universalism that would break down all distinctions among groups; sometimes in the name of distinctions established by others. If the former impulse has yielded "tragicomic figures claiming the right to direct humanity's future when they have lacked the most basic understanding of themselves," the latter has yielded an often servile elevation of everything sanctified by the adopted culture.

Rubin perceptively shows how, in our own day, this deformity extends even to the world of the academy, where "Jewish professors championing Western civilization . . . battle other Jewish professors fighting for multiculturalism and more third-world material in the curriculum." Needless to say, "both sides see themselves as impartial fighters for truth"—but for neither side does the truth embrace anything smacking of their own culture. The credo of such humanists, Rubin writes, might be: "nothing is alien to me—except Jewishness."

But how strong *is* the assimilationist impulse today? As Rubin notes, thanks to the antithetical movements of history, Jews intent on merging into their host societies can now do so freely, at least in the democratic West, while in Israel, Zionism has rendered assimilationism utterly irrelevant. In the future, he concludes, Jews will either be "normalized citizens of a Jewish state [i.e., Israel], non-Jewish citizens of other societies, or find some stable level of semi-integration." In each of these cases, the "logical culmination" of assimilation will be, ironically enough, to "extinguish" assimilation itself as a viable or even a necessary strategy.

RUBIN'S BOOK is very welcome for its compelling portraits of individuals and types. But it is also flawed. For one thing, by focusing on the rich and/or famous and influential, Rubin has avoided the more central task of dealing with assimilation as a genuine mass phenomenon, by means of which hundreds of thousands of individuals have quietly disappeared from Jewish history. Nor has he thought about the causes and consequences of this mass phenomenon in historical terms.

Had he done so, he would have had to focus on the numerous shifts in *government* policies toward Jews in the modern era, especially in the areas of education and military conscription; on Jewish migratory patterns; and on the different pace of assimilation among different segments of the Jewish population (especially as between male and female, and urban and rural); on the role of violence—particularly, in Europe, Soviet and Nazi violence—in forcibly alienating far greater numbers of Jews from their traditions than might otherwise have been the case; on the economic realities of the various societies in which Jews have settled in relatively large numbers; and so forth.

Further, he would have had to note that assimilation is not a uniquely Jewish phenomenon. Over the last few decades numerous scholars have placed assimilation in an illuminating cross-cultural perspective; unfortunately, the impact of their work is not felt here.

As for whether the assimilationist impulse has run its course, as Rubin believes, that one may be permitted to doubt. As his own narrative suggests, the impulse seems to be alive and well in the most advanced sectors of Western society, including in the universities (though it would be wrong not to register the presence, even in those same sectors, of countervailing forces and even of a return, among some, to Jewish traditionalism). In Israel, too, paradoxical though it may sound, the desire to escape the "taint" of Jewishness is hardly unknown—it only takes on new and more inventive forms.

IN THE end, then, this book hardly "solves the enduring riddle of Jewish assimilation." Nor does it tell anything close to the whole story. Yet *Assimilation and Its Discontents* is nevertheless valuable in documenting clearly the creative energies unleashed by the desire of many Jews to adopt some other identity; the often grotesque results of these efforts; and the ways in which they have sometimes failed miserably even to achieve their desired aim of camouflage and disappearance.

Perhaps the most poignant such failure, and one rich in historical irony, can be glimpsed in the very ease with which Rubin is able to identify, as Jews, any number of people who changed their names in order to disguise their origins; of people whose parents and even grandparents were baptized as Christians; of people who insisted that they were Germans, or French, or citizens of the world, anything but Jews—to no avail. Even if it does not do everything it might, Rubin's book has much to teach us both about assimilationism and about its numerous, sometimes amusing, often bitter, discontents.

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The Way of the Brahmin

A Good Life:
Newspapering and Other Adventures
by Ben Bradlee
Simon & Schuster. 514 pp. $27.50

Reviewed by
George Russell

BENJAMIN CROWNINSHIELD BRADLEE is without question one of the great American newspapermen of the century; the word Watergate alone would serve to place him in that not always admirable pantheon. But then there are three words more: the *Washington Post*. With the active support of the Graham family, whose property the paper is, the *Post* as we know it is essentially Bradlee's creation—an immense achievement, and one which flies in the face of the critic A.J. Liebling's observation that freedom of the press in America consists mainly of the right to own one.

During Bradlee's tenure as executive editor, which ran from 1968 to 1991, the *Post*, hitherto a sedate, provincial daily, became what he tells us he had always intended it to be, the only newspaper to be mentioned in the same breath as the *New York Times* (the center of another vast, family-controlled media empire). Under Bradlee, the *Post* redefined investigative reporting, feature reporting, gossip; most of all, it may have redefined the role of modern journalism. Along with the *Times*, the *Post* became a crusading liberal newspaper—the one Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew loved to hate, until they themselves were no more—and, even more than the *Times*, the force that politicians and bureaucrats had to face over their morning coffee. As *Post* columnist Meg Greenfield said at Bradlee's retirement, "Ben made the *Post* dangerous to people in government."

Altogether, then, there is a lot to acknowledge—and a lot to answer for. But quite apart from the issue of Bradlee's influence, there is also the man himself, who has cut a personal swath to match his journalistic stature. A salty-tongued Boston Brahmin who floated from Harvard via the Navy into journalism; friend and Georgetown streetmate of John F. Kennedy and, in his pre-*Post* days as White House correspondent of *Newsweek*, intimate scribe of Camelot; pillar of the Washington power structure, regardless of who was in power, for more than 30 years, Bradlee has been a social lion as well as a corporate tiger, and the most important native exemplar of the journalist-grandee.

With such a trajectory, the field for personal reminiscence could hardly be richer. And so the pity is all the greater that this memoir is a disappointment. Not only does Bradlee have so many predictable things to say, but he says them so predictably. Thus, we learn that the task of journalism is to strike fear and trembling amid the powerful in government; that journalism itself needs more honesty; and so forth. What this book leaves mostly unanswered, in fact almost unexamined, is the question of what makes Ben Bradlee tick. In over 500 pages, he never dips far below his craggy and well-tailored surface.

Instead, we are left with a maze of contradictions, personal and political alike. However deep Bradlee's distrust of power, for example—a common journalistic prejudice—it seems hardly ever to have been on display on social occasions (except, perhaps, those involving the Nixon and Reagan White Houses). However sweeping his passion for the common man—a passion which has impelled many a journalistic crusade—it rarely colors this work, which is by and large a loving recollection of the status enjoyed and the successful career paths traversed by those Bradlee has known along his way. However strong his liberal opinions, we never learn what, exactly, they are.

Bradlee acknowledges at the outset that something is missing, excusing himself as "a newspaperman trained to stay off the stage and keep himself and his feelings out of the story." But this leads to even greater puzzlement. The same man who helped to nail the adulterous Senator Gary Hart to the mast is capable of telling us that in his own fabled intimacy with JFK—foursome weekends splashing around in swimming pools, more than 125 interviews collated in *Conversations With Kennedy*—he had no knowledge whatsoever of the President's energetic extramarital sex life. Indeed, Bradlee says he was shocked and appalled when he found out the truth, and no more so than when he discovered that Kennedy had had an affair with Bradlee's own sister-in-law, Mary Pinchot. He goes so far as to state that if the public had known of Kennedy's involvement with Judith Exner, the one-time girlfriend of Chicago mobster Sam Giancana, the President "would have been impeached." But having unburdened himself of this thought, he moves swiftly and resolutely on.

NOR IS that the end of it. The same Ben Bradlee who in 1971 fought all the way to the Supreme Court for clearance to print the classified Pentagon Papers (on the record of American military involvement in Vietnam) reveals here that he tipped off the CIA's William Webster in 1986 when a low-level CIA employee wanted to spill the beans about the extent of U.S. penetration of Soviet nuclear systems. And Bradlee the aggressive defender of the press's First Amendment prerogatives passed along to the CIA in 1981 what he and his editors suspected—cor-

GEORGE RUSSELL *is a senior editor at* Time.

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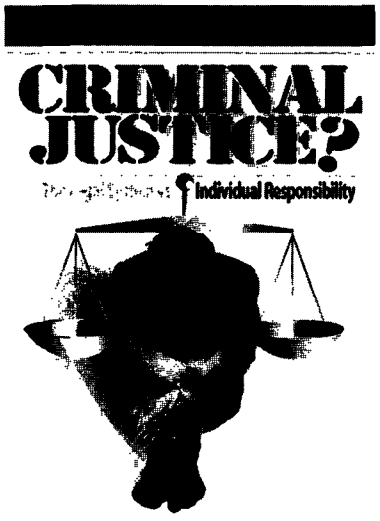
rectly—were Russian missile secrets, in part to "combat the constant charge from the morons that the press in general—and the *Post* in particular—regularly disregarded the interests of the country for a scoop."

Bradlee was, in other words, anxious to be regarded as a patriot when it mattered—or perhaps when he had something useful to barter with the powerful agencies he more often baited. For if anything consistent emerges from this tale of a Brahmin's ascent, it is that Bradley's real obsession has been not with ideology or ideas but with proximity and access: to the wealthy, the powerful, the talented, and the successful. "I like people with style, with flair, with signature qualities," he writes, "provided they have more than style and flair and signature qualities." He is, of course, one of them—and also a fan of them, a tireless networker among them, an aspirant to their company.

In that connection, the most interesting stories Bradlee tells here are the early ones: of a childhood in a merchant banking family staggered by the Depression, his father reduced to the role of an accountant; of an education at St. Mark's prep school paid for by his cousin Frank Crowninshield, founder of *Vanity Fair* and in-law to the DuPonts; of the support given to his family by his maternal grandfather, a name partner in the law firm of Cravath, deGersdorff, Swaine & Wood. From childhood on, Bradlee was schooled in the reality that connections to the well-placed were what mattered most.

To be sure, it was only in the narrow social circles of Boston that Bradlee could be considered anything of an outsider—but those were the circles that forged his perceptions and his principles (another trait he shared with Kennedy). If his family was pushed out of those privileged confines by the Depression, the story Bradlee tells here is, among other things, a tale of how he himself got back in. It is thus only fitting that the journey should have reached its apotheosis in the part he played in the downfall of Washington's paramount outsider: that inveterate loner, resentful scholarship boy, and suspicious anti-establishmentarian, Richard Milhous Nixon.

Having come full circle in his Wasp's progress, Bradlee is not always sure he approves of the changes he helped to cause in American political and journalistic life. He is not happy, for example, about the press's unceasing invasion of the privacy of the great and



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good, although he accepts it as one consequence of the rules he helped to write. (As his stories about Kennedy demonstrate, the way to avoid having to publish truly indiscreet things is to make sure never to find them out in the first place.) He is also concerned about the insistence in newsrooms on protecting at all costs the anonymity of sources—journalism's potential short-circuit of the right of every man to face his accuser; but without recourse to that practice, this autobiography would have been a lot shorter and, in the case of Watergate and "Deep Throat," it would have been robbed of its central drama.

Bradlee himself paid a price for the practice of relying on anonymous sources when, in 1981, the *Post* had to return a Pulitzer Prize won by one of its young black reporters after it was revealed that her story about an eight-year-old heroin addict in a Washington slum was a complete fabrication. But the remedies he says he then adopted were little more than a reaffirmation of past practice, with added emphasis on vetting résumés.

It is, in fact, difficult for Bradlee to dislike what he has in such large measure brought about, no matter what misgivings he might harbor. And that is understandable. A book entitled *A Good Life* is after all not the place to turn for an analysis of what the liberal elitism incarnated by Bradlee and the *Post* has done to the country, a catalogue that by now would have to include the inevitable reactions to that elitism in the form of 90's populism and, even, nativism. Such a book, especially if penned by one of the most driven, combative, and talented press figures of the age, would have been a lot more insightful than *A Good Life*—but that is not this Brahmin's way.

Memory Man

The Stories of
Vladimir Nabokov
edited by Dmitri Nabokov
Knopf. 659 pp. $35.00

Reviewed by
Robert Alter

VLADIMIR NABOKOV wrote his first short story in 1921, when he was a twenty-two-year-old Russian émigré student at Cambridge University. Over the next two decades, living first in Berlin and later in Paris, he would produce, in Russian, a total of 55 stories. His first novel, *Mary*, appeared in 1926, and this longer narrative form soon became his primary vehicle. After his immigration to the United States in 1940, and his switch to English, he would write only ten new stories—though at least three of them are quite remarkable, and their publication in magazines like the *New Yorker* and the *Atlantic Monthly* played an important role in establishing his American reputation. After the 1950's, he wrote no more stories.

It is good to have the complete stories, including thirteen Russian ones never before translated, in a single volume. The collection contains a half-dozen minor masterpieces and many other works that afford pleasures large and small, and some of which also illustrate the characteristic defects of Nabokov's artistic virtues. Taken together, the stories highlight features of Nabokov's vision of humanity that are often not kept sufficiently in view by critics of his novels.

Nabokov's signature traits—the delight of his admirers, a perennial annoyance to his detractors—are inevitably on exhibit here. There are the wryly witty reimaginings of ordinary things, like this detail, *circa* 1940, of a shabby Parisian quarter: "the ceaseless Alpine gurgle of desolate latrines." There is painterly, or cinematic, visualization: "In the dark of the night his starched shirtfront bulged like a whitish hump, and the flame of his cigar, like a ruby pinecone, illumined his small, wrinkled face from below." There are delicately aestheticized images of the world: "In the soft flow of sunlight between two tongues of foliage midges circled like golden dust, and a bumblebee, entangled in the heavy lacework of a fern, already buzzed with a more reserved, evening tone." The last two examples are both from "La Veneziana," a brilliant 1924 story, unpublished in the author's lifetime, that was Nabokov's real breakthrough, in which he fully discovered his characteristic themes of the ambiguous relation between art and reality, and passion and sexual betrayal.

Also on display in quite a few of the stories is Nabokov the supremely inventive gamesman. There are cunning tricks of visual and temporal perspective, slippery narrators who turn out to be different from what they first appear, ploys of allusion and jugglings of letters, sounds, and words, culminating in the famous last paragraph of the late story, "The Vane Sisters," which encodes an acrostic message to the narrator and reader. But these elements are rather less common than one might have expected. If some of the early stories can be faulted for excessive contrivance, a good many more can be faulted on other grounds, as slices of life insufficiently transmuted into art—bleak little fragments of the dreariness and quiet desperation of émigré existence, or bitter indictments of the totalitarian spirit.

What emerges, in fact, from a reading of the collected stories is

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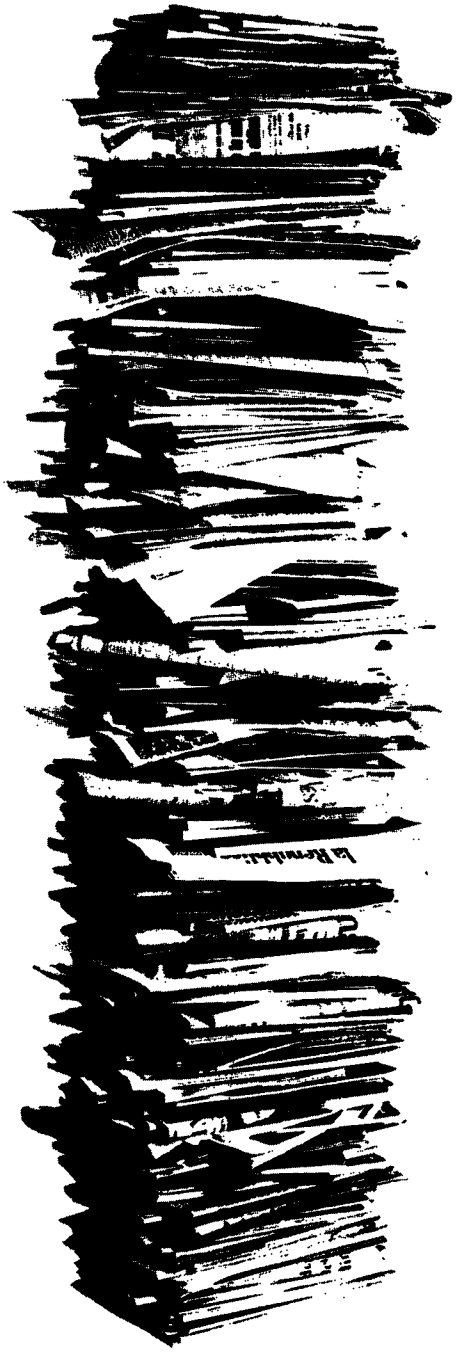

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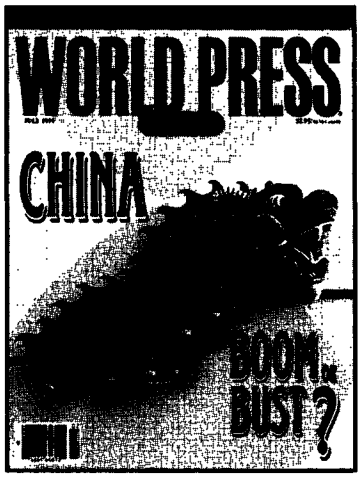

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that Nabokov's overriding concern as a writer is not technical cleverness, or even the paradoxes of artifice and art, but rather pain, loss, and loneliness. From the beginning of his career, his great undertaking was to evoke pathos without sentimentality, and his celebrated techniques of "defamiliarization" are to a large extent an effort to achieve precisely that end. One can see this, for example, in the accelerated deadpan report on the fate of the heroine of "A Russian Beauty," who flees her homeland in 1919:

> Everything happened in full accord with the style of the period. Her mother died of typhus, her brother was executed by a firing-squad. All these are ready-made formulae, of course, the usual dreary small talk, but, it all did happen, there is no other way of saying it, and it's no use turning up your nose.

As the central figure of the story "Lik" reflects about himself, the typical Nabokov protagonist is someone "condemned to live on the outskirts of life." These characters tend to be bumbling, inept, well-meaning, sometimes harboring a great ambition they will never realize, very often having been granted the fleeting, frustrating fulfillment—or only the ardent dream—of a consuming love whose object they lose forever through betrayal or death. The painful fate of Luzhin in *The Defense* (1930), of Pnin in *Pnin* (1957), even of Humbert Humbert in *Lolita* (1955) is adumbrated in many of these tales of tender-minded, passionately loving losers. And if in them Nabokov's technical impulse to reinvent narrative conventions is a defense against effusive feeling, it is at the same time a means of bringing the anguish and isolation of his protagonists into sharper focus.

The loss of something surpassingly precious—a place, a landscape, a person—is the fundamental experience of Nabokov's world, and the source of its peculiar poignancy. The wrenching displacement of exile that he himself underwent is not, I think, the origin of this underlying perspective, but rather a kind of politically and geographically magnified model for it. "We transformed everything we saw," remarks the narrator of "The Admiralty Spire,"

> into monuments to our still nonexistent past by trying to look at a garden path, at the moon, at the weeping willows, with the same eyes with which now—when fully conscious of irreparable losses—we might have looked at that old, waterlogged raft on the pond, at the moon above the black cowshed.

In Nabokov's treatment, the experience of emigration is never a unique case for special pleading or self-pity but instead a broad-scale instance of what is, after all, the universal human condition—that we become passionately attached to things we inevitably lose.

In this perspective of ineluctable pain, art becomes the supreme instrument of memory, a kind of fixative for that terrible flux of life which sweeps away from us everything we love (as Nabokov would luminously affirm in *Speak, Memory* [1966], the book that, after *Lolita*, may be his finest achievement). The climactic revelation that comes to the protagonist at the end of "The Circle" is the one toward which all of Nabokov's narrative artistry drives: "Suddenly Innokentiy grasped a wonderful fact: nothing is lost, nothing whatever; memory accumulates treasures, stored-up secrets grow in darkness and dusk." In the end, the profuse technical virtuosity of Nabokov's fiction is actuated by a desire to compensate for the inevitability of loss by making memory yield up its treasures, by vividly *realizing* the world in words: a puddle in a gutter, a street lamp in fog, a butcher-shop window, the delicate curve of a lovely woman's neck.

"When I want to imagine her," the émigré narrator of "That in Aleppo Once . . ." says of his desperately beloved, irrevocably vanished wife, "I have to cling mentally to a tiny brown birthmark on her downy arm, as one concentrates upon a punctuation mark in an illegible sentence." This telescoping of a desired body and person with a printed text is characteristic of Nabokov, with his hyperconsciousness of the formal medium through which he represents the world. But what is equally Nabokovian is the focusing on a concrete image in order to hang on to some vestige of love lost. These twin impulses in his writing explain much of its paradoxical fusion of crystalline artifice and poignant feeling.

The Great Emancipator

Abraham Lincoln
by David Herbert Donald
Simon & Schuster. 714 pp. $35.00

Reviewed by
Walter Berns

DAVID HERBERT DONALD, a distinguished historian of the South and a two-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize for biography, is the Charles Warren Professor Emeritus of American History and American Civilization at Harvard. In recognition of his eminence, he was invited by President George Bush in December 1989 to deliver the first of what was to be a series of White House lectures on Amer-

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ican Presidents; quite properly, he lectured on Lincoln, "the greatest of our Presidents." He has now published what is being hailed as the definitive Lincoln biography.

In some respects, the book deserves the praise. Drawing on Lincoln's personal papers and on legal documents long sealed to the public, Donald is able to present the most detailed account ever written of Lincoln's career, from impoverished boy to small-time lawyer and local politician and, finally, to President and commander-in-chief in the most deadly of our wars. Yet something is lacking in this account. Donald announces that his purpose is "to explain rather than to judge." But it is impossible fully to explain Lincoln without judging him. He was a man of extraordinary ambition, passions, capacities—including an extraordinary intellect—and a man fully aware of his superiority, however much he tried to hide it. In brief, Lincoln cannot be explained without assessing what he did and, equally important, what he said.

Donald begins by telling the story of Lincoln the sometime schoolboy, bargeman, storekeeper, surveyor, state legislator, small-town lawyer, and autodidact. But he says nothing of a quality that goes far toward "explaining" Lincoln as a young man and that distinguishes him from nearly all our other Presidents: namely, his disinterested passion for learning, or, to employ a phrase from Tocqueville, his "taste for the pleasures of the mind."

In those days in Illinois, judges would go on circuit, and with them would go the lawyers, moving from town to town, trying cases by day and staying in the same hotel and frequently in the same room by night. In his own biography of Lincoln, his law partner "Billy" Herndon tells how, while the others were sleeping, sometimes all together in a single bed, Lincoln would lie on the floor with a lamp studying Euclid's geometry. There is an intellectual beauty, an elegance, in Euclid's *Elements*—it is one of the truly Great Books—but only an unusual intellectual curiosity could have led a backwoods lawyer to pick it up and set out to master it, starting with the definition that "a point is that which has no part," proceeding through the demonstration that all the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, and on to the end. Why did he do it? Donald is content merely to say that Lincoln read Euclid, and leave it at that.

More is missing in Donald's account of Lincoln the budding statesman. "In tracing the life of Abraham Lincoln," he writes in the preface, "I have asked at every stage of his career what he knew when he had to take critical actions, how he evaluated the evidence before him, and why he reached his decisions." Fair enough, up to a point. But Lincoln's deeds, his evaluations of reality, the decisions he reached, and, above all, his words—words that moved the nation and resound among us to this day—were influenced by his political thought, and this biography has almost nothing to tell us about that. To Donald, Lincoln, who asserted he never had a political thought that did not derive from the Declaration of Independence, was nothing but a pragmatist.

This will not do. Lincoln reentered politics in 1854 with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which permitted slavery to be extended to those territories on the basis of "popular sovereignty," and ran for the Senate in 1858 against Stephen Douglas. As Lincoln saw it, the Act represented an abandonment of the principles embodied in the Declaration of Independence. Did it? And if so, did that matter? In their historic debates, Lincoln answered yes, Douglas answered no. To Donald, however, there is no way of knowing who was right: "[W]hether the Declaration of Independence intended to include blacks in announcing that all men are created equal [is] an interesting, if ultimately unresolvable, historiographical problem." Besides, Donald goes on, "it was not easy to see just what [this] had to do with the choice of a Senator for Illinois in 1858."

Lincoln and Douglas understood that it had everything to do with that choice, and so did the many thousands of Illinois voters who stood for hours—as Donald points out, there were no seats—listening to them debate the slavery question. According to Donald, Lincoln and Douglas "exaggerated their differences" on the issue. But did they? If, as Lincoln insisted and Douglas denied, blacks were among the men who were endowed by their Creator with the unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, then slavery was wrong, and its extension into the territories ought to be prohibited, as it had been prohibited prior to the adoption of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. If slavery was not wrong, what was to prevent its spread, not only into the territories but into Illinois and the other Northern states? Having been assured by the Supreme Court (in the *Dred Scott* case of 1857) that "the right of property in a slave is distinctly and expressly affirmed in the Constitution," why should not Northerners also see the advantage of "wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces"?

Lincoln and Douglas were contesting more than a Senate seat; they were engaged in a contest for public opinion, or, in Lincoln's words, for the public mind on slavery. Although Douglas won the Senate seat in 1858, Lincoln was destined to win that wider contest. Told by friends that if he posed a certain question in the debate, he would lose the Senate race, Lincoln replied, "Gentlemen, I am killing larger game; if Douglas answers, he can never be President, and the

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battle of 1860 is worth a hundred of this." He was right, and the rest is history.

DONALD'S ACCOUNT of the Lincoln presidency—the problems he faced, the fools he tolerated, the generals he endured, the defeats he suffered, and, despite it all, the objectives he successfully pursued—is, so far as it goes, the best ever written. But, however rich in details, once again it fails to explain Lincoln's greatness, or the reverence in which he is held by his countrymen.

One element of that greatness was a wise and humane prudence. Instead of immediate and wholesale emancipation, for example, Lincoln at one point during the war proposed that the Southern states be compensated by the national government in return for a willingness, over a period of years, to abolish slavery within their boundaries. Although Congress rejected the plan, there was much to be said in its favor. As Lincoln averred correctly, it would bring the war to an end, and while its costs would be great, the cost of the war was much greater. Best of all, the plan would rescue the then-living slaves from "the vagrant destitution which must largely attend immediate emancipation." Yet about Lincoln's reasons for advancing this plan, Donald says nothing.

Donald is similarly weak on another, contrasting element of Lincoln's greatness—namely, his decisiveness, which was often combined with the most powerful and painful introspection. We find here only the briefest reference, for example, to what Lincoln called his "leg cases," involving soldiers who deserted because God had given them a "cowardly pair of legs." Probably no duty Lincoln had to perform as commander-in-chief caused him greater anguish—"You don't know how hard it is to let a human being die, when you feel that a stroke of your pen will save him"—but he nevertheless authorized the execution of 267 such men during his four years in office. These, surely, are deeds and thoughts worthy of mention in a definitive biography. Here they are ignored.

Most significantly, Donald seems to be oblivious to the power of Lincoln's words and the role they played, and that Lincoln intended them to play, in his policy. Thus, he is content merely to remark the responses in the country, pro and con, to the Gettysburg Address, saying nothing of its beauty, its purpose, or its continuing effect on generations of Americans.*

IN SHORT, for a fuller appreciation of Lincoln's greatness, we have to turn elsewhere than to this new biography. My own strong recommendation for a good place to start would be the "memoir" of Lincoln first published in 1916 by an Englishman, Lord Charnwood:

> Many great deeds had been done in the war. The greatest was the keeping of the North together in an enterprise so arduous, and an enterprise for objects so confusedly related as the Union and freedom. Abraham Lincoln did this; nobody else could have done it; to do it he bore on his shoulders such a weight of care and pain as few other men have borne. When it was over it seemed to the people that he had all along been thinking their real thoughts for them; but they knew that this was because he had fearlessly thought for himself. He had been able to save the nation, partly because he saw that unity was not to be sought by the way of base concession. He had been able to free the slaves, partly because he would not hasten to this object at the sacrifice of what he thought a larger purpose.
>
> This most unrelenting enemy to the project of the Confederacy was the one man who had quite purged his heart and mind from hatred or even anger toward his fellow-countrymen of the South. That fact came to be seen in the South too, and generations in America are likely to remember it when all other features of his statecraft have grown indistinct.

Unlike Charnwood's memoir, Donald's biography is a masterful assemblage of the facts of Lincoln's life; but we would look in vain in it for what "generations in America" remember of his example.

*I have dwelled on these qualities in my review of Garry Wills's *Lincoln at Gettysburg* in the November 1992 COMMENTARY.

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